


FRANCISCAN MARTYRS
IN
ENGLAND



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FRANCISCAN MARTYRS

IN

ENGLAND.

BY MRS. HOPE,

AUTHOR OF 'THE EARLY MARTYRS,' 'THE APOSTLES OF EUROPE,'
'LIFE OF S. PHILIP NERI,' ETC.

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PREFACE.

THE revival of wide-spread interest in the English martyrs and confessors of the sixteenth and following centuries, and the steps recently taken for their beatification, are a sufficient apology for the publication of whatever may throw fresh light on the subject. A special call for the present volume, however, exists. The *Records of the English Jesuit Province* and the *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers* have done justice to the members of the Society. The *Douay Diaries* and F. Knox's interesting preface to them have set forth the glories of the secular clergy and the English colleges on the Continent. Challoner's *Memoirs* have taken a wider range, including clergy and laity, regulars and seculars. But all these works are limited to the second persecution, which was opened by Queen Elizabeth. Up to the present time the heroic virtues of those who bore the first burst of the storm and were literally swept away by its fury, Benedic-

tines, Franciscans, and the other old Orders, have been left unnoticed, the bare mention of the names of a few of them in F. Law's *Calendar of the English Martyrs*, and scarcely more in Sanders' *Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*, alone bearing witness to their very existence. Nor has even an attempt been made to show how at a later period the fiery heat of persecution awoke a new life in these old Orders, and how the supernatural power of their respective rules carried them on fearless through the darkest times up to the long-delayed hour of victory and peace.

To fill this gap as regards the Franciscans is the motive and object of the present volume. The reason for thus treating them as a separate group is simple and obvious. Each Order has its distinctive spirit, and historic truth and devotion alike are best served by drawing out the characteristics of each. This is especially true with respect to the Franciscans. Contempt for the world and human respect, insatiable thirst for poverty, humiliations, and suffering, and passionate longing for union with Jesus crucified, which naturally led to indomitable courage, childlike simplicity and joyousness, and tender personal love of our Lord, were the heritage bequeathed to them by their Seraphic Father. This peculiar Franciscan spirit may be traced throughout their history, and gives a certain

unity of character to their early prosperity, their fearless defiance of Henry VIII., and all their martyrdoms.

A further motive for the publication of this volume is afforded by the nature of the original materials from which almost exclusively it is drawn. These are, for the earlier period of the history, Thomas of Eccleston, the Register of the London Friary and other Franciscan records published by Dr. Brewer, Wadding's Annals of the Order, and F. Parkinson's *Collectanea Anglo-Minoritica*, and for the post-Reformation time, Wadding and Parkinson, who carry on the history to the reign of Elizabeth, Danielle's translation of F. Bouchier's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, F. Angelus Mason's *Certamen Seraphicum*, and De Marsys' *Histoire de la Persécution présente des Catholiques en Angleterre*.* As all these books are more or less rare, and all except Danielle, Parkinson, and De Marsys are in Latin, they are beyond the reach of the ordinary English reader. The same applies to *Certamen Seraphicum*, or the *Seraphic Conflict*, which consists of the biographies of five martyr-priests in the reign of

* Sieur de Marsys was a gentleman attached to the French Embassy in London in the time of Charles I. His narrative of the martyrdoms of which he was an eyewitness is very graphic. The present writer is indebted to F. Law's kindness for the use of a transcript of this scarce book, a full account of which will be found in F. Law's preface to Challoner's *Memoirs*, ed. Jack, 1878.

Charles I., written by their contemporary, F. Angelus Mason, who was intimately connected with four of them. It is an exquisitely beautiful work,* but unfortunately very rare, and therefore little known. De Marsys' book also is very scarce. It was noticed for the first time by Mr. Simpson in the *Rambler*; but it has hitherto been unknown to, or at least unused by, other English writers on the subject. Frequent reference has also been made to State papers and to Protestant historians of authority. The brief sketch of Mary Tudor's reign is taken exclusively from Protestant writers, some of whom, such as Burnet, Fuller, and Fox, are notorious for their bigotry and bitter animosity to the Church.

Finally, we would offer our thanks for valuable assistance to FF. Law and Garnett of the London Oratory, F. Dolan, O.S.B., F. Eccles, O.S.F., the Abbess of the Franciscan Convent at Taunton, the Abbess of St. Clare's Abbey, Darlington, and the Abbess of the Poor Clares-Colletines at Baddesley.

* The full title of this book may be thus translated : 'The Seraphic Conflict of the English Province for the Holy Church of God. In which is briefly set forth how the English Friars Minor have, with pen and blood, done battle for the Faith of Christ and His Holy Church. Douai, 1649.'

FRANCISCAN MARTYRS IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

S. FRANCIS OF ASSISI.

THE thirteenth century was a great era in Christian history. It was the transition period between the Middle Ages and modern times. At its opening the Christian faith ruled Europe. In Christ's name every law was promulgated. On His authority all government was based. His Vicar enjoyed not only his inalienable position as the spiritual law-giver of Christendom, but also the political power which the state of Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire had forced upon him. At its close, national and civil rights were set up in defiance of Christ's authority. His Vicar was subjected to personal violence, and natural motives of action began to take the place of supernatural principles.

Though at the beginning of the century the old order of things was still unmoved, yet it was evident that some great change was close at hand. While commerce, wealth, and general civilisation had greatly advanced, the ideas which had hitherto held society together were losing their hold. The union of the innumerable races and tribes of Christian Europe into one family, under Christ as their common Father and the Pope as His Vicar, was breaking up

through the growth of its members into separate nations with their mutual rivalries and contending rights. The feudal system, which had defined the respective duties of superiors and inferiors, was paralysed by the ambitious pretensions of both kings and nobles to increase their power; while the middle classes, enriched by commerce and massed together in towns, strove to assert their independence of both and were always ready to help each against the other. Thus oppression, strife, and violence reigned on every side.

Moreover, intercourse with the East through the Crusades and with the Arabs in Spain, while it had given a great impulse to thought and learning, had also brought into Christian Europe Oriental luxury and vices, the practice of magic, Manichæism, and a host of heretical and pagan opinions, which were rapidly spreading among all classes. At the same time the natural increase of the Church's wealth, and the sacrilegious intrusion of unworthy men into her bishoprics and abbeys, had combined with the disorders of the times to ruin discipline and produce great laxity of clerical morals, so that the spiritual influence of the clergy was weakened, or even lost, at the very time when it was most imperatively called for.

But the indwelling Divine life which animates the Church, not only sustains her in her ceaseless warfare against enemies superior to her in natural strength, but is within her an inexhaustible source of vital energy, which, at the very moments when her outer life seems to languish, bursts forth with irresistible force, and developing itself in new and more perfect forms, reveals her Divine origin and imperishable nature. Widespread as was the demoralisation of the clergy, the numerous severe decrees issued at this time by Bishops and Councils against gross immo-

rality, simony, and worldliness, prove that this Divine life still dwelt in the rulers of the Church. Even the complaints of clerical depravity which are found in writers of this period show that it still stirred many souls to aim at the highest perfection, and consequently to practise it to some extent. It also kept alive the religious spirit, giving birth to new and stricter Orders, such as the Cistercians, Carthusians, Premonstratensians, and Carmelites, to take the place of relaxed communities. Nay, so earnest was this religious spirit that it gave an opportunity to the heretics to lead pious souls astray by contrasting their own rigorism with the degeneracy of Catholics. The great practical question then was, how this living energy within the Church could be turned to account to correct the prevailing disorders.

Pope Innocent III., who then sat in S. Peter's chair, courageously upheld Christian principles in his decisions on the numerous appeals which came to him from almost every country in Europe. The great Council of Lateran, over which he presided, promulgated canons which are a standing monument of Christian faith and morals. But still it was universally felt that all this did not suffice to meet fully the present emergency, and that some new and more powerful instrument than any which the Church yet possessed was wanted to leaven the great masses of society with the Christian spirit, to bend rebellious wills, and to kindle the dying sparks of Divine faith and love in hard and worldly hearts. Such an instrument, supernaturally formed to meet this great crisis in the Church's life, was found in the Seraphic S. Francis of Assisi. In him Pope Innocent recognised the poor despicable man whom he had seen in vision propping up the Church of the Lateran as it was tottering to its ruin, and also the palm springing up at his feet, which became a tree of wondrous size.

The way in which S. Francis accomplished his task was so novel, yet so simple and so perfectly suited to the position of the Church, as to leave no doubt of his Divine call.

The spirit of S. Francis and his Order sprang out of the leading events of his conversion and life. Gifted with a generous and aspiring nature and filled with the chivalrous feelings of his time, he could not be content with the mere acquisition of wealth, to which, as the son of a merchant of Assisi, he was born, but panted with youthful ardour for a more noble career. One night he had a vision in which he saw a magnificent palace full of warlike arms all marked with the cross; and on asking to whom they belonged, he was told that they were destined for him and his soldiers. Greatly elated at the promise of military renown which he understood to be made him, he set out to join the army of Walter, Comte de Brienne, in Apulia, saying triumphantly to his friends, 'I am sure to be a prince.' But the next night at Spoleto our Lord said to him, 'Francis, who can do most for thee—the Lord or the servant, the rich or the poor?' 'The Lord and the rich,' answered Francis. 'Why, then, dost thou leave the Lord for the servant, the infinitely rich God for man who is only poverty?' 'O Lord,' exclaimed Francis, 'what wilt Thou that I do?' Jesus answered, 'Return home. The vision with which thou hast been favoured foretells only what is spiritual. It is from God, and not from man, that its accomplishment will be brought about.' Francis at once obeyed, and returning to Assisi, gave himself up to prayer.

One day, as he prayed, Jesus appeared to him, as if attached to the cross. At this sight his soul was so transfixed and melted, and the image of his crucified Saviour was so intimately imprinted on his heart, that whenever from this time forth he thought of

Jesus crucified, he could not restrain his sobs and tears. From this loving compassion there sprang up within him humility, the love of poverty, and ardent charity for the poor, especially for lepers, in whom he saw the image of Him who had made Himself 'as it were a leper,'¹ for love of him. After two years the words of the Gospel, 'Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff,'² fully revealed to him his vocation. He threw away his purse, took off his shoes, and exchanged his coat for a coarse and rough tunic of undyed wool, and his girdle for a cord. Henceforth his life was simply an imitation of Christ crucified,—exteriorly by poverty, mortification, and preaching; and interiorly by contemplation, through which, 'beholding the glory of the Lord with open face,' he was 'transformed into the same image from glory to glory.'³ He was now always either weeping for the Passion of Jesus, or filled with ecstatic joy at the outward insults and interior consolations which he received, or labouring in works of charity for the sick and poor, and especially for sinners, for whom Christ had died and for whom he longed to shed his own blood. At length, two years before his death our Lord appeared to him in the form of a seraph on the cross, rapt him in seraphic joy while the sword of compassion pierced his soul, and teaching him that it was not by mortification of the flesh, but by the fire of love that he was to be wholly transformed into the perfect likeness of Christ, imprinted His wounds on his hands, his feet, and his side, as on liquid wax, and sealed him bodily with the image of Jesus crucified.

As disciples flocked to him, he trained them on the same principles in which he himself had been supernaturally trained. He told them our Lord's

¹ Isaias liii. 4. ² S. Matt. x. 9, 10. ³ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

words to himself, 'Francis, I desire that thou shouldst be in the world a fool, preaching by thine actions and thy discourses the folly of the Cross. Do thou and thine follow Me only, and not any other manner of life.'¹ The crucifix was their only book, and the observance of the Gospel, in obedience, in poverty, and in chastity, was their rule. In the practice of evangelical poverty they acquired humility to accept insults and injuries with joy, obedience like that of a dead body which does not notice what is done with it,² mortification of self-love, self-will, and self-opinion; and thus stripped both of worldly possessions and of personal property in their talents and acquirements, they could place themselves unreservedly in our Lord's hands and offer themselves to the embraces of Jesus crucified.³ The apparent austerity of this mode of life was merged in its spirit, which was essentially gentle and sweet. For as the lover deems nothing hard or painful which removes the barrier between him and his beloved—as the seven years that Jacob served for Rachel 'seemed to him but a few days, because of the greatness of his love,'⁴ so the son of S. Francis was filled with joy and consolation by the hunger, thirst, nakedness, insults, and sufferings which broke down the barrier of his sinful nature and transformed him into the image of Jesus crucified.

Though the Franciscan Order was founded at the close of the Middle Ages, three of its features show that its character was modern. Its motive principle was not faith, which was that of the Middle Ages, but love, which marks the modern spirit. The promise of obedience to the Pope made by S. Francis and succeeding Ministers-General was unnecessary at a time

¹ Life of S. Francis, by Chalippe, book iii. p. 270, Oratorian Series.

² S. Bonaventure, Legend of S. Francis, chap. vi.

³ Ibid. chap. vii.

⁴ Gen. xxix. 20.

when Christ's Vicar was universally obeyed as His representative; and thus it evidently looked forward to a period of schism when this obedience would be the test of Catholic unity. Finally, the popular organisation of the Order anticipated the increasing influence of the popular element in national life, which dates from the thirteenth century and continues to the present day.

CHAPTER II.

ARRIVAL OF THE FRIARS IN ENGLAND.

ON the 16th of October 1209, S. Francis and his sons, twelve in number, made their vows to Pope Innocent III. Within ten years, on Whit-Sunday, May 26th, 1219, more than five thousand brethren assembled at Assisi to hold the second Chapter of the Order, and during its course S. Francis admitted above five hundred novices.

There was already in the Order an Englishman, Br. William, who was greatly revered for his sanctity, and on account of his remarkable gift of miracles, was often called *Thaumaturgus*. He prevailed on S. Francis to found in this Chapter an English Province; and Br. Agnellus of Pisa, a deacon, was appointed to be its first Minister-Provincial. Br. Agnellus had already, by order of the first Chapter, taken part in the foundation of the French Province and had held the offices of *Custos*¹ of France, and Guardian of the convent in Paris, which he had built. On his present journey through France he made a short stay with his brethren for their mutual consolation, and in order to collect helpers for his new mission. He

¹ The *Custos* was next in rank to the Provincial, and had charge of all the convents in a custody or district.

chose three clerks, all Englishmen, and five lay-brothers who were to go with him, besides several others who were to follow before long. The clerks whom he took with him were Richard of Ingeworth, already a priest and preacher, Henry of Devon, who was in minor orders, and William of Essebey, a novice, but already remarkable for his great virtues. When the Provincial of France said to him, 'Do you wish to go to England?' he answered, 'I know not whether I wish or not.' The Provincial expressing surprise at the strange answer, he added, 'I know not what I will, because my will is not my own, but my Superior's, and he can determine it as he pleaseth.' The lay-brothers were Henry of Cervise, a Lombard, and afterwards the first Guardian of the convent in London, Laurence of Beauvais, William of Florence, Melioratus, and James Ultramontanus, still a novice.

The monks of Fescamp charitably conveyed the missionary band to Dover, where they landed on the 3d of May 1220.¹ The first night that they spent in England they begged for hospitality at a gentleman's house. Their strange dress and miserable appearance excited suspicion, and when they retired to rest their host locked them up in a strong and well-barricaded room. But being very tired they slept

¹ F. Parkinson, the author of the *Collectanea Anglo-Minoritica*, prefers this date, as agreeing with the *Annals of the Order by Wadding*, and with *Matthew Paris*, who says, under the year 1243, 'the Friars began to build their first house in England scarce four-and-twenty years ago.' But *Thomas of Eccleston* and the register of the house in London, probably on his authority, give the date September 8, 1224, apparently because *Eccleston* says that they came four years after Henry III.'s coronation, without noticing that Henry was twice crowned—namely, in 1216 and 1220. The earlier date is confirmed by the fact that *Br. Laurence of Beauvais* spent some years in England before he returned to S. Francis, at whose death in 1226 he was present.

soundly, and did not find out till day-break, when they were preparing to go away, that they were prisoners. Later in the day they were brought forth before a great crowd of people, and were asked who they were, and why they had come to England.

Their explanation of their pious motive not being believed, they were accused of being spies and robbers. Whereupon one of the friars, handing his cord to his accusers, said merrily, 'If you take us for robbers, here is a halter ready to hang us with.' The humorous reply turned the tide of popular feeling; and all present declaring that those who were so ready to die could have no evil intentions, they were allowed to go on their way in peace.

They now went to Canterbury, where they were hospitably received by the Benedictines of the Holy Trinity. After two days they removed to the Poor Priests' Hospital, to which was attached a school, a small room of which was assigned to their use. Here it was their custom to spend the day in prayer till evening, when the scholars joined them. Then they would make a fire, round which they would all sit; and heating in a jar, with a plate over it, the stale beer which they had begged, they would pass it round, and each as he drank would be required to say something for general edification. Many an innocent joke would mingle with pious tales and quaint maxims, and the evening would pass in simple and holy merriment. The friars soon became very popular, and those who were admitted to their society deemed themselves fortunate.

Meanwhile Br. Agnellus had presented his commendatory letters from the Pope to the king, Henry III., who received him graciously and gave him leave to settle at Canterbury. Henry was even said to have founded the house there, which was the first

they had in England;¹ but their principal benefactors were Alexander, a priest and provost of the Poor Priests' Hospital, to which the land on which it stood belonged, Cardinal Stephen Langton, his brother Simon, Archdeacon of Canterbury, and Lord Sandwich. Here they lived, constantly increasing in numbers and public estimation, till 1270, when Sir John Diggs, Alderman of Canterbury, removed them to the island called Binnewith, between the two channels of the Stour, which he had bought for their use, and on which he built them a large convent. This continued till the sixteenth century to be one of the principal houses of the Order.

After the Ember-days in September Br. Agnellus was ordained priest, and Henry of Devon subdeacon, by Cardinal Langton. On this occasion the Archdeacon said, 'Draw near, ye Brothers of the Order of the Apostles;' and for many years they were known in England by this honourable name. They were also called Grey Friars, from the colour of their habit, and Friars Minor or Minorites, because, from humility, they professed to be less than all other Orders or persons.

After the ordination Br. Agnellus sent Richard of Ingeworth, Henry of Devon, Henry of Cervise, and Melioratus to London, bidding the two former go on to Oxford as soon as the others should have found a home. In London they stayed for a fortnight with the Dominicans, who had a house in Holborn. At the end of this time John Travers, Sheriff of the city, and several other pious citizens, hired for them a small house in Cornhill where they remained till the next summer. So great were the devotion and charity excited by their penitential life, that Ewin or Irwin, a rich mercer and citizen who afterwards entered the Order, gave a piece of land

¹ Collect. Angl.-Minor. part ii. p. 8.

in the Shambles of S. Nicholas, near Newgate, and with the help of the principal citizens built a large convent and church for their use. Br. Agnellus laid the foundations when he came to London on his way to Oxford a little before Christmas 1220; and it took more than five years to complete the buildings.

Richard of Ingeworth and Henry of Devon set out for Oxford just before the feast of All Saints. Having lost their way, they were benighted near a grange belonging to the Benedictines, about six miles from Abingdon. Knocking gently at the door they humbly begged for a night's shelter; and the monks, supposing from their patched habits that they were wandering mountebanks, gladly invited them in. But when the friars explained that they had devoted themselves to an apostolic life, the monks were so angry at losing their expected amusement, that they kicked and beat them, and turned them out of doors. A young monk, however, fearing that they would perish in the bitter cold night, sought them after the Prior and the brethren had gone to bed, put them into the hay-loft, and brought them food. During the night the young monk dreamt that he and his brethren stood at Christ's judgment-seat, and that a poor man in a habit like that of his guests, called on our Lord to avenge the cruelty with which his sons had been treated on the preceding night. Our Lord asked the Prior to what Order he belonged. He answered, to that of S. Benedict. But S. Benedict disowned him, because he had ordered that his houses should always be open to all sorts of guests. Whereupon the Prior and all the elder monks were hanged on an elm-tree that stood by. Our Lord then asked the young monk to what Order he belonged. He, fearing a like punishment, answered that he was of the Order of S. Francis. Then that poor man, who was no other than S. Francis, ran up to him, exclaiming, 'He is mine, Lord;

he is mine !' and pressed him so closely to his heart that the young monk awoke. Terrified at this awful dream, he rushed half dressed to the Pricer, and found him and the other monks struggling with death as if they were being hanged. They all ran to the loft to bring the friars into the guest-rooms, but found that, fearing further ill-treatment, they had gone away at break of dawn. The young monk was so impressed by his dream that he soon after entered the Order at Oxford.

Richard of Ingeworth and Henry of Devon arrived early in the morning at Oxford, where they stayed for a week with the Dominicans. Then Robert le Mercer, a citizen of Oxford, lent them a house.

But many bachelors of arts and nobles having entered the Order, they soon after hired a larger house in the parish of S. Ebb's, between the church and the Watergate, from Richard le Muliner, or Miller, a very rich citizen, who before the lapse of a year made it over to the corporation of the city for their use. Br. Agnellus arrived in Oxford about Christmas, and appointed William of Essebey, who now made his profession, the first Guardian of Oxford. He was careful also to have a good school attached to the convent; and he asked Robert Grosseteste, afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, who was then considered the very glory of the university, to undertake the charitable office of teaching the friars. Grosseteste gladly consented, and taught in the friars' school for several years, till Br. Adam de Marisco, also a celebrated doctor of Oxford, who had entered the Order, returned from his travels and took his place.

Both the town and the university now rang with the praises of the friars, and great crowds of people flocked to their house, some from curiosity, and others from a sincere desire to know more of these men whose apostolic way of life had touched their hearts.

The school was thronged with scholars, and many persons of high birth and great learning and talents entered the Order. All classes vied with each other in rendering them service. Their house and land being too small for their increasing numbers, Mr. Thomas Walonges, Dr. Richard de Mepham, and Agnes, a widow, each made over for their use a small piece of ground; and many other wealthy persons exerted themselves to build them a large house. But the principal founder was the king, Henry III., who held his court at Oxford. Being anxious to have the convent as near him as possible, he had a gate made in the wall of the city, so as to give him a free communication with their house. Not only did he bear the principal expense of building it, but he put his own hand to the work; and many prelates and nobles, animated by his example and still more by that of the friars, laid aside all pride and thoughts of worldly greatness, and served the masons with stones and mortar.

On the arrival of Br. Agnellus in Oxford, Richard of Ingeworth and Henry of Devon had gone on to Northampton, where, being kindly received, they built a house in the parish of S. Giles's. They then went on to Cambridge, where the citizens assigned to their use an old synagogue adjoining the gaol to which there was a common entrance. But being disturbed in their devotions by this noisy neighbourhood, they procured a plot of ground with ten marks sent them by the king for the purpose, on which they built themselves a very small chapel, such as a carpenter could erect in one day with fourteen couples of planks. At Shrewsbury the king gave them a piece of land and the citizens built them a house. The king also built them a convent at Salisbury, and another at Southampton; and his affection for them was so great that he would gladly have placed them in all the

great towns in his kingdom. Houses were also founded for their use at Worcester, Lichfield, Gloucester, Lynn, Norwich, Bridgewater, Bristol, and many other places, sometimes by bishops and nobles, but more often by the citizens. As time went on the Order was carried to York and the north of England, and even earlier to Scotland and Ireland.

CHAPTER III.

WORK IN ENGLAND.

WHEN the Friars Minor arrived in England, King John's persecution of the Church and the recent civil war had reduced the nation to extreme misery. Excessive worldliness and licentiousness prevailed among clergy and laity.¹ All classes were a prey to faction, strife, and violence; mutual hatred took the place of Christian charity; and the peace which the Pope's Legate had lately brought about, was but a pause in the civil war, which within a few years again broke out. In these wretched circumstances the perfect detachment of the friars from all worldly objects, and their simple charity towards all persons and classes without any distinction, won them universal confidence and influence. The letters which Br. Adam de Marisco wrote at this time give us a vivid picture of their social position.

Br. Adam was, as has been told, the head of the friars' school at Oxford. He raised the school and university to the first rank in Europe, and this great work might naturally have engrossed all his time

¹ This description of the work of the friars in England is taken chiefly from Brewer's preface to his *Monumenta Franciscana*.

and thoughts. But he was also the most intimate friend of Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, and Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, the two reformers of the day. Great as was the bishop's zeal for clerical reform, it did not satisfy Br. Adam, who constantly pressed on him the necessity for greater strictness. While he encouraged Simon de Montfort to devote himself to the relief of his oppressed fellow-subjects, he exhorted him to correct the faults of his own character, and especially to govern his temper,¹ to procure for himself 'the saving comfort of God's word by frequent examination of the Holy Scriptures, especially the Book of Job with S. Gregory's Commentaries';² and to preserve 'in his own person, his soldiers and servants, and all belonging to his government, devotion to God, unbroken loyalty to man, friendship, uprightness, peace with each other, and perfect charity with all.'³ His affection for the two reformers did not, however, cut off Br. Adam from the friendship of their opponents. The king and queen frequently required his attendance at court. Boniface, Archbishop of Canterbury, leant on him for counsel and support; and bishops, abbots, nobles, and persons of all classes called for his help. In fact, nothing was too great or too small to claim his loving care, from preaching a crusade to begging books and parchments for poor scholars.

Meanwhile his brethren sent him to Rome with S. Anthony of Padua, to uphold strict observance of their rule. The Minister-General, S. Bonaventure, summoned him to France; and he was carried off to the General Council of Lyons. But in spite of such varied and important duties, he never remitted his loving quest for souls, nor ceased to be the lowly ser-

¹ Ep. Adæ de Marisco, 137, ap. Brewer, *Monumenta Franciscana*, p. 264.

² Ep. 140, p. 268.

³ Ep. 135, p. 261.

vant of the poor. He still found time to write countless letters, suggesting religious motives for ordinary actions, interceding for penitents snatched from the jaws of hell, seeking redress for the oppressed, help for poor simple women, and charity for insolvent debtors, needy scholars, and indigent persons of all degrees.

Though all the friars had not the same talents nor the same distinguished position as Br. Adam, yet the above gives a correct idea of the sort of life which all of them led. Wherever they went, whether to royal and lordly halls or to the peasant's mud hovel, they mixed familiarly with all classes, finding in all the same vices and the same scope for loving admonition, strengthening counsel, and acts of charity. Thus they were like a fragrant and healing balm poured out over the bleeding land, penetrating into deep festering wounds, and infusing the life-giving spirit of Christian love.

But it was with the town populations that the mission of the Friars Minor chiefly lay. In the towns the English thanes, driven from their family lands by the Normans, had taken refuge. Thither they had transplanted their old German habits of industry, association, and law. They had formed themselves into guilds, had gradually obtained various privileges from the Crown as a protection against the barons, and quite recently by uniting with the barons they had wrung civil liberty from the Crown. But while thus rising in social importance, they held themselves aloof in proud independence, without any feeling of loyalty to the sovereign, who was a foreigner, hating the barons as their hereditary foes, and despising the clergy for the scandalous failings of individuals which came most prominently to their notice. Without schools or libraries, which as yet were to be found only in monasteries, they were necessarily ignorant and narrow-minded. But in their intercourse

with foreign traders, whether at home or in journeys abroad, they often picked up notions suggestive of subtle religious doubts, which they were too ignorant to solve, and which, being regarded with horror and contempt by the ill-educated clergy with whom alone they came in contact, were thus left to be obstinately brooded over by their active minds.

To the towns the mendicant lives of the friars naturally led them. Travelling two and two, sleeping under arches or hedges, or in a barn or shed, receiving gratefully the poorest scraps of food and giving in return manual labour, or at least cheering and edifying words, they could approach the reserved citizen without rousing his pride or awaking his suspicion, and could draw out the best points of his generous nature. In familiar intercourse their host would be drawn on to open his heart to his guests, whose sympathy would give them the key to his thoughts and feelings. Possibly the poor friars might be learned in theology, or they would probably have heard subtle questions simply explained in their convent. But in any case they had spent days and nights before the crucifix, and had learned from it how to meet their host's difficulties and open out to him the deep mysteries of God's love and wisdom in the simple form which he could best understand. The heretical and communistic principles which now disturbed France and Italy, and a century later broke out in England as Lollardism, had already found an entrance among the traders in the English towns; and it was only through the influence of the Friars Minor that they never spread widely or took deep root.

But there was still a lower class who had a prior claim on the son of S. Francis. Round the base of the hill on which the English towns generally stood, within the walls down to the edge of the stagnant ditch into which ran the refuse of the shambles, or even spread-

ing beyond their protection, rude wooden sheds thickly clustered, choice lurking-places for fever and leprosy, and in which plague did its worst. Here dwelt a motley crowd of wretched beings, slaves escaped from tyrannical masters, criminals flying from the cruel justice of feudal barons, poor outcasts of all classes and races, without social rights, living and dying unknown and uncared for. But in the Friar Minor they had a brother. Among them he by preference took up his abode. The chief house of the Order in England was in Stinking Lane, near the shambles, and close to the Newgate of the city of London. In Oxford, their convent was in the low parish of S. Ebb's; in Cambridge it was near the gaol; in Norwich it was by the water-side close to the town wall; and in all other cases the friars sought to be lodged no better than the poor among whom they lived and worked. However poor and wretched these outcasts of the towns might be, the friar was bound to be more so. Whatever he might chance to possess in excess of their destitution, he was taught by his Seraphic Father to regard as a loan which he must restore to those who were poorer than himself, and the keeping of which would be a theft of which he would have to give account to God.¹ On them he lavished his care and love, helping them in their work, nursing them in sickness, starving with them, and raising them to hope and self-respect. For when they beheld poverty greater than their own thus voluntarily embraced by their social superiors, their hearts were opened to perceive the dignity and the joys of the state, which had hitherto inspired them only with sullen discontent and fierce enmity to God and man.

In the Middle Ages leprosy was looked on as a curse from God beyond the reach of medicine.

¹ Legend, chap. viii.

The leper was driven from his home and family, disqualified to make a will or exercise any civil right, and received even by the Church only as a penitent. S. Francis shared this universal feeling. One day, at the very beginning of his conversion, as he was crossing on horseback the plain which surrounds Assisi, he unexpectedly fell in with a leper. He naturally turned away with horror and disgust. But quickly remembering that he must conquer himself if he would be the soldier of Jesus, he dismounted, and hurrying towards the leper, kissed the hand which was stretched out to him for an alms. He then remounted his horse, but as he looked round the wide plain no leper was to be seen.¹ Surprised and overjoyed he broke forth into songs of praise; and from this time the leper, in whose form our Lord had deigned to appear to him, was the special object of his love and the favourite of his Order. He taught his sons to frequent the leper hospitals; and novices, whatever might be their rank, were required to prove their vocation by nursing lepers.

Besides their daily work among their neighbours, such of the brethren as were best qualified were appointed preachers. They made excursions into the country to assist priests unaccustomed to preaching, or they collected a crowd at some thoroughfare or under some spreading tree, and preached to them as S. Aidan, S. Cuthbert, S. Aldhelm, and holy men of old used to do. Their eloquence caused them also to be sent for to preach before the court, or in cathedrals and abbeys on great festivals. Their style was brief, simple, and practical. The life of our Lord on earth, especially His Nativity and His Cross and Passion, was to them an inexhaustible theme. His relations to His Virgin Mother, her Immaculate Conception, tenderness, and authority, and the obedience

¹ Legend, chap. i.

due to Christ's Vicar, were always on their lips. Through these mysteries they appealed to the purest affections of their hearers, illustrating their teaching by anecdotes or parables, and sometimes even by playful jokes. Thus they brought their instructions within the comprehension of the most ignorant and connected them practically with their daily life.

Many of the brethren, whether preachers or not, were trained to be confessors. The necessity for this part of their work appears in the fact, that Br. Haymo of Faversham having once preached in a church on Good Friday, a great crowd of persons who he knew could not have been to confession, came up to the altar on Easter-day to receive Holy Communion. Fearing that many of them might be in mortal sin, he asked leave of the priest of the church to address them ; and he preached to them with such effect that most of them deferred their Communion, and he spent the three following days in hearing their confessions.¹ The tender sympathy and unlimited charity of the friars caused them to be much in request as confessors with both clergy and laity. Br. Vincent of Worcester, who was remarkable for severity to himself and sweetness to others, was universally beloved as the angel of God. Br. Godfrey of Salisbury was moved with such compassion in hearing confessions, that if his penitent did not feel due compunction he would excite it in him by tears and sobs. Thus Alexander of Bissinburne, once confessing his sins as if he were telling a tale, was softened to tears by seeing his spiritual father weep bitterly, and resolved to enter the Order, in which he soon after made a holy death.

But it was by their example, which was a constant protest against the world and the flesh, that the

¹ Eccleston, Collat. v. ap. Brewer, Monument. Francisc. p. 221.

Friars Minor preached most forcibly. When they were about to settle in any place they were careful, in obedience to S. Francis, not to accept more land than was absolutely necessary, and to erect on it only low buildings with mud walls of the poorest kind. As they were forbidden to possess property, gifts of land and houses to them were vested in corporations and other trustees, on whose charity they depended for their use. In their first house in London the partitions between their cells were made of twigs and stuffed with dried grass. Br. Agnellus insisted that the walls of their house at Oxford should not be more than a man's height; and when the house in London had to be repaired the low roof was left standing, and only the mud walls were cleared away and replaced by stone. At Gloucester he refused the greatest part of a piece of land that was offered him; so that some years after when Br. Haymo of Faversham, the third Provincial, wished the brethren to have some land to till, they were obliged to beg for it a second time as an alms from the owners. At Shrewsbury the townsmen having built the dormitory walls with stone, Br. William of Nottingham, the fourth Provincial, removed them and replaced them with mud walls. The Guardian of Gloucester was deprived of his hood for placing pictures in the church, and one of the friars for painting the pulpit.

Though they lived on alms, yet S. Francis bade them work when possible, not for hire or to receive the price of their labour, but as a good example and to avoid idleness. In begging they were forbidden to take any but the commonest food, or more than was barely necessary, or to return often to the same person, lest the alms should become virtually a pension. They were allowed to accept beer, provided it was stale; and often it was so thick that they were obliged to put water into it, and so sour that they

could not drink it till it was heated. At Shrewsbury when two monks asked hospitality of them, they had to borrow a jug of ale; and when it was passed round the friars placed it to their lips for appearance' sake, but did not drink.¹ In London they had so little firewood that when Br. Salomon returned home from his quest so frozen that they thought he would have died, they could not light a fire, and could only warm him by pressing round him and thus giving him heat from their own bodies. In the Custody of Cambridge for many years they had no cloaks, and in that of Oxford they had no pillows.

Going barefoot in the ice and snow of England was very different from what it was in sunny Italy. Notwithstanding, it was done. Br. Salomon, after his ordination and having dined at the Archbishop's table, walked barefoot from Canterbury to London through such deep snow that his feet were frost-bitten; and after two years one foot was about to be cut off, when happily an abscess broke and brought relief. On another occasion two friars were picking their way on Christmas-day through a wood between Oxford and Gloucester along a rough road of frozen mud and snow, marking their path with the blood from their naked feet. Behind them, at some distance and unknown to them, rode a knight who bore them ill-will. As they went along the younger friar said to the elder, 'Brother, shall I sing and lighten our journey?' Leave being given, he thundered out a 'Salve Regina,' exclaiming joyously at its close, 'Brother, was not that antiphonal well sung?' Whereupon the knight, who had been noticing the blood from their feet on the ground, broke in, saying, 'Yes, by the Lord, it was! May the Lord bless and prosper you, who, like the Apostles, are patient in necessities and rejoice in tribulation!' Then slipping

¹ Eccleston, Collat. i. p. 8.

down from his horse and falling on his knees, he asked their pardon for the harsh judgments he had passed on them.¹

The bare foot of the friar was not only his universal passport, it was also his safeguard amid all dangers. It chanced one day that Br. Walter Madele found a pair of shoes; and being tempted to put them on when he went to Matins, he thought he was more comfortable than usual. But when he returned to bed he dreamt that he was passing through a part of Bagley Wood between Oxford and Gloucester, where robbers fell upon him, saying, 'Kill him, kill him!' He cried out, 'I am a Friar Minor.' But they answered, 'Thou liest; thou art not barefoot.' 'Indeed I am,' he exclaimed, and instinctively put out his foot. But lo! he had the shoes on. Whereupon waking in a great fright, he jumped up and threw the shoes out of the window.²

A peculiar attraction of the Order was the absence of any trace of gloom, or of the solemn gravity which suggests the suspicion of hypocrisy. S. Francis said that his sons ought to be an example to others by their charity rather than by excessive abstinence or severity; and that discretion ought to regulate their practice of virtue.³ S. Bonaventure considered joy an unfailing sign of a high state of grace; and Br. Peter of Tewkesbury, the fifth Provincial, said that three things were necessary for health of body, viz. food, sleep, and fun.⁴ The brothers were always happy and merry, and even when silent, joy beamed on their countenances and a mirthful smile played on their lips. Some of the young friars at Oxford were even so given to laughing that a rule had to be made, that whenever they did so in choir they should be

¹ Chronic. de Lanercost, 31, ap. Brewer, p. 632.

² Eccles. Collat. vi. p. 28.

³ Legend, chap. v.

⁴ Eccles. Collat. xiv. p. 64.

beaten. This rule, however, was not very severely enforced. But one of them, who had laughed as usual and had not been beaten once throughout the day, had at night a vision that he was in choir and his companions were tempted to laugh, when the Crucifix over the door turned to them and said, 'Those who laugh and sleep during the chanting are the sons of Core.' Our Lord then tried to take His hand from the cross, as if He were about to go away; but the Custos went up to Him and fastened the nails, so as to prevent His doing so. The young friars were so frightened at this vision that there was no more laughing in choir, and they applied themselves with greater zeal to the practice of truthfulness and humility.¹

CHAPTER IV.

PROGRESS.

THE rapid spread of the Franciscan Order in England amid rampant vice and worldliness was a striking proof of the supernatural vitality of the Church. Thirty-two years after the arrival of the Grey Friars no less than forty-nine houses had been founded for their use. In 1258, when S. Bonaventure held a General Chapter at Narbonne, there were seven Custodies in the English Province, viz. London, York, Cambridge, Bristol, Oxford, Newcastle, and Worcester. Bartholomew of Pisa gives us the names of sixty convents in England in 1399; and F. Parkinson adds eighteen more, besides five in the English possessions in France, four in the English Pale in Ireland, and others in England which he does not specify. It should be borne in mind that these friaries

¹ Eccleston, Collat. iv. p. 20.

were not splendid edifices like the abbeys of the Middle Ages, but mean buildings, barely sufficient to accommodate their inmates, and therefore their increase implies a corresponding increase in the number of the friars. So numerous were the friars in the English Province that the Minister-General was in the habit of appointing an English friar to be his Commissary and act for him in important affairs. The Provincial of the Observants, *i.e.* the Grey Friars of Strict Observance, who lived at Greenwich, generally held this office.¹

There were also several houses of Poor Clares, one of which was founded in London on the spot still called the Minories by Blanche, Queen of Navarre, and her husband, Edmund of Lancaster, brother of Henry III.²

Though all the records of the Grey Friars, with the exception of the Register of their London house, were destroyed in the sixteenth century, yet we learn from other sources that all the Catholic sovereigns of England, except Richard III., were their benefactors. Henry III. was either a founder or benefactor of the convents of Canterbury, Oxford, Southampton, Salisbury, Winchester, Nottingham, Coventry, Bury S. Edmund's, Dunwich, and York.³ Edward I. built them a new house in Cambridge on the site where Sydney Sussex College now stands, with a very large hall in which the public business of the university was carried on. He also built them a house in Reading to which he gave a good library; and he induced the Bishop of Exeter to build them one in that town.⁴ His first queen, Eleanor, was buried in their convent at Bedford, of

¹ Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 213.

² Ibid. Supplement.

³ Dugdale, vol. vi. pp. 1512, 1524, 1532, 1533, 1545.

⁴ Ibid. p. 1509, Collect. Angl.-Minor. part ii. p. 22.

which she was the foundress ;¹ and his second queen, Margaret, founded their new church in London.² Edward II. was a benefactor of their house at Scarborough and also of that at Colchester.³ Edward III. was a founder or benefactor of their convents at Walsingham, Berwick, Greenwich, and Maidstone ; and the Black Prince of that at Coventry.⁴ Richard II. took them under his protection and in 1383 ordered the universities to repeal various laws which they had made against them ; and Henry IV. confirmed his order by a writ dated 1401.⁵ Henry IV. also, in his expedition against the Welsh rebels in 1401, restored their liberty and their house to the Grey Friars of Llanvais, near Beaumaris, whom his troops had plundered and made prisoners ;⁶ and some years later when they were in great distress, Henry V. relieved them, and provided that eight friars should always be maintained there.⁷ Henry VI. wrote to S. John Capistran inviting him to send a number of Observants to occupy the houses which he had built for them in England, but the locality of which we do not know.⁸ Edward IV. built a house for the Observants at Greenwich.⁹ Henry VII. built houses for them at Greenwich, Richmond, and Newark, and restored those at Canterbury, Southampton, and Newcastle.¹⁰ Henry VIII. made an annual allowance to the Grey Friars at Oxford ; and Mary refounded the houses of London and Greenwich. As to

¹ Dugdale, vol. vi. p. 1509.

² Ibid. p. 1519.

³ Ibid. p. 1511.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 1512, 1513, 1523, 1533, Collect. Angl.-Minor. part ii. p. 31.

⁵ Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 173, part ii. p. 17.

⁶ Ibid. p. 186.

⁷ Dugdale, vol. vi. p. 1545.

⁸ Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 202.

⁹ Dugdale, vol. vi. p. 1512.

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 1512, 1523, 1524, 1532, Collect. Angl.-Minor. part ii. p. 12.

Richard III., though not their benefactor, he was the recipient of their charity. After the battle of Bosworth, when his body was stripped, thrown across a horse, and borne ignominiously from the field, it received hospitality and Christian burial from the Grey Friars of Leicester.¹

The Register of the London house tells us that in their church were the tombs of four queens, viz., the foundress Margaret, Isabella, queen of Edward II., Joan, queen of David Bruce of Scotland and daughter to Edward II., and Isabel, queen of the Isle of Man, besides those of a host of other persons of royal and noble birth, all of whom must have been benefactors. Nobles and bishops, it is true, had their share in the erection of this church and house, which it took twenty-one years to finish; but the chief benefactors were the Corporation and citizens of London. Side by side with Edward III., Queen Philippa, and the four queens above mentioned, stand the names of the Corporation, of Richard Whittington, the famous Lord Mayor, who built the library and bought most of the books, of William Tayler, Henry III.'s shoemaker (Stow says tailor), who gave the water-course, conduit-head, and water-house, and those of numerous Lord Mayors, Sheriffs, Aldermen, citizens and traders of all degrees, Priors and Prioresses, priests and religious communities. The smallness of many of the donations, down even to the annual rent of a few pence, shows how strictly the friars observed poverty, and that all classes, whether rich or of small means, united in devotion to them.² So far as can now be gathered from our imperfect sources of knowledge, the principal benefactors of the convents in the other English towns were their citizens.

¹ Dugdale, vol. vi. p. 1513.

² *Prima Fundatio Fratrum Minorum Londoniæ*, ap. Brewer, p. 493.

Similar success attended the schools of the Grey Friars. When they arrived in England the English universities were in a low state. Englishmen went abroad to study, and such of them as gained a reputation for learning preferred to hold chairs in foreign universities rather than at home. But the foundation of the Grey Friars' school at Oxford made a total change. Foreigners flocked thither in hundreds. Thousands of students crowded the streets, and intense intellectual activity became the chief characteristic of the place. The other provinces of the Order sent their members to study in England, and obtained from thence teachers for their own schools; and foreign universities acknowledged the preëminent learning of the English doctors.

We have a long list of doctors and writers of the Order, whose influence in advancing learning was very great. Of these the two most famous were Roger Bacon and Duns Scotus. Roger Bacon has been styled the father of experimental philosophy. He explored every branch of science, and there is scarcely a principle of physics since discovered of which he had not a glimpse. So deeply did he penetrate into the mysteries of Nature that he was popularly believed to owe his knowledge to magic. He died in 1292 at the age of seventy-eight.¹

His contemporary, though much his junior, was Duns Scotus, surnamed the Subtle Doctor, who died in 1308 at the age of thirty-four. So vast was the fund of knowledge which he acquired in so short a life that he is said to have been indebted for it to the special favour of our Blessed Lady, to whose service he had vowed himself. But all his other attainments are thrown into the shade by the fact that to him the Church owes the earliest promulgation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which, after the lapse

¹ Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 109, Brewer, preface, p. 50.

of five centuries and a half, has been dogmatically defined as he taught it. After his famous public disputation in its defence in Paris, that university decreed that the degree of doctor should not be granted to any one who did not take an oath to defend and promote his doctrine on the subject; and the universities of Cologne, Naples, Mainz, Salamanca, Seville, and Alcala de Henares required their doctors to promise never to argue against it.¹

It was, however, only as the means of gaining a deeper knowledge of God and making Him better known to others, that the Grey Friars prized learning. S. Francis had ordered his sons not to let their studies interfere with their spirit of prayer, but to pray more than they read. Hence the Cross and the Gospel continued to be their great book, and their other studies were but a commentary on them. Theology, which at this period was generally neglected, they made their principal study. Logie, which was abused by heretics and unbelievers, they applied to its legitimate use as the handmaid of revelation; and by sound reasonings they removed the captious doubts which heretics had infused into the minds of the simple and ignorant. The sympathy with nature as God's work, which S. Francis had bequeathed to his sons, led them to the study of physical science; and their ministrations to the sick turned their attention to medicine, so that they were universally sought for as physicians of the body as well as the soul. With a view to their apostolic mission schools were established in most of their convents. As early as 1254 they had no less than thirty lecturers on divinity in various parts of England; and no one was allowed to teach at the universities till he had already done so at these convent schools. Thus, on the one hand the tone of their teaching was kept up to the highest standard, and on the other the

¹ Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 129.

knowledge of theology was diffused among the brethren, by means of whose apostolic work it filtered down through all classes of society. The remarkable tenacity with which the lower classes of the nation clung to the Catholic faith in the sixteenth century, in spite of the persevering efforts of their rulers to corrupt them, is a striking proof how widely theology in its simplest catechetical form had been diffused by the oral teaching of the friars.

The great and continued success of the Order in England may be traced to the strictness with which they kept to their founder's rule. In the General Chapter of 1230 Br. Elias, the first Minister-General after S. Francis, tried to introduce a relaxation of the rule. But the English friars unanimously voted against it; and chiefly through their influence and that of S. Anthony of Padua strict observance was maintained.¹ Br. Albert of Pisa, who was elected the second Provincial of England in 1233, declared, after putting the virtue of the English friars to the severest tests, that he had found them exemplary in the pursuit of perfection and ready to go to prison or to exile for the strict observance of the rule.² John of Parma, the eighth Minister-General, after making a visitation of the English Province, used to say, 'O, that this province was placed in the middle of the world that it might be an example to all the churches.'³

In course of time relaxations of the rule as regarded property were granted by successive Popes. Notwithstanding, strict observance was kept up by a large party, who took the name of Observants, while the others were called Conventuals. The Observants applied in 1415 to the Council of Constance, who discharged them from the ordinary obedience to the Minister-General, and allowed them to have three

¹ Eccles. Collat. xii. p. 49.

² Ibid. Collat. xiii. p. 55.

³ Ibid. Collat. xiv. p. 68.

provinces under a Vicar-General. The greater part of the English friars, however, refused to take part in this separation, because, in fact, they were all Observants except in name, both parties living together in community and renouncing all property.¹ Gradually the Observants increased in number, till in 1499 the whole Province of England, whether Conventuals or Observants, was incorporated in the Observance and had two votes in their General Chapter.² Finally, in 1517 Pope Leo X. issued the famous Bull of Union, which decreed that all the friars who lived among the Conventuals and yet observed the whole rule, were to be united with the Observants; that the Minister-General of the whole Order was to be an Observant; and that the Conventuals were to be governed by a Master-General and Masters-Provincial, who were to be subject to the Minister-General and Ministers-Provincial of the Observants. In obedience to this Bull most of the Grey Friars in England became Observants and the Conventuals were subject to them.

Thus in the early part of the sixteenth century the English Province was in the highest state of discipline.

CHAPTER V.

THE MARTYR'S CROWN.

S. FRANCIS, at the beginning of his conversion, rebuilt the churches of S. Damian, S. Peter, and S. Mary of the Angels, in literal obedience to our Lord's command, 'Francis, go and build My house; for it is falling into ruins, as you see.' These three churches symbolised the three heavenly crowns predestined for

¹ Collect. Angl.-Minor. p. 193.

² Ibid. p. 211.

his Order.¹ Three centuries had elapsed since the foundation of the English Province. The crowns of sanctity and learning had been quickly won; but the martyr's crown was still in abeyance, and even seemed to be quite out of reach. Not only was the English nation unstained by martyr's blood, since the murder of S. Thomas had not been a national act, but the state of religion in England appeared to shut out the very possibility of martyrdom.

While all other countries of Europe were convulsed by heresy and schism, England's faith and loyalty to the Pope were beyond suspicion. The popular devotion to our Blessed Lady was such as befitted 'the servants of her special inheritance and her own dowry.'² Crowds of pilgrims flocked to her shrines, especially to that at Walsingham. Thither the king, Henry VIII., had gone in 1505, and again in 1510, when he had made the pilgrimage barefoot from Barsham, had presented her with a necklace of great price, and had undertaken the expense of glazing the windows of her chapel. Not only had he himself written the famous book in defence of the Pope, and engaged Dr. John Kinton, a learned Franciscan of Oxford, to write on the same subject,³ but when Sir Thomas More objected that in his book he had advanced and defended the Pope's authority unduly he had answered, 'We are so much bounden unto the See of Rome that we cannot do too much honour unto it. Whatsoever impediment be to the contrary, we will set forth that authority to the uttermost, for we received from that See our crown imperial.'⁴

The favourite spiritual reading of the day, such as *Sixteen Revelations of Divine Love* and the *Scale*

¹ Legend, chap. ii.

² Wilkin's Concilia, tom. iii. p. 246.

³ Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 222.

⁴ Life of More, by William Roper, p. 66, ed. 1822.

of *Perfection*, shows that the religious fervour which had characterised the nation in past ages was unabated. The glimpse into ordinary family life afforded by the *Paston Letters* proves that the Church was deeply rooted in the habits and affections of the people. The Franciscans, Carthusians, and Bridgetines, all three of an austere and contemplative character, were the most popular religious Orders; and of these the Franciscans were the most influential. Closely united to each other by strict discipline and fraternal love, and to S. Peter's Chair by their Minister-General's vow of obedience, their interior supernatural strength was very great. Their position at Oxford placed the learning and education of the country in their hands. Their poverty and detachment from human respect and worldly motives made them fearless in speaking plain truths, even to the king and most powerful nobles. Their tender sympathy and charity won the hearts of the poor and sorrowing; while their eloquence and indefatigable zeal in going about preaching, hearing confessions, and promoting religious devotions commanded the esteem of all classes.¹ Both the king and the queen were attached to them. In 1519 Henry obtained from Pope Leo X. an exemption for them from the authority of all prelates, and even of the apostolic legates; and during the first ten years of his reign, F. Stephen Baron, Provincial of the English Observants, was his confessor. Catherine was a Tertiary of the Order, and wore the habit under her royal robe. Whenever the court was at Greenwich she joined the friars in the nocturnal office. She fasted every Friday and Saturday, and on the Vigils of our Lady's feasts took only bread and water. She confessed every Wednesday and Friday, and went to Communion on Sunday. She said the Office of the

¹ Burnet, *Hist. Reform.* part i. book iii. p. 304, ed. Pocock.

Blessed Virgin daily, spent six hours every morning in church, had the Lives of the Saints read to her during dinner and till two o'clock, after which she returned to the church and remained there till supper-time.¹

But in this fair picture of the general religious state of England up to the year 1530, there was one dark spot. This was the excessive worldliness of the nobility, gentry, and higher clergy. No sacrifice of principle to the king's will in exchange for honours and wealth, was deemed too great. Even before the separation from the Catholic Church, the servility of the courtiers and Parliaments, 'as if in mockery of their own and their country's liberties,'² was really amazing; and in the subsequent progress of schism and heresy, worldly motives of various kinds were openly held out as the lure to the upper classes to take part in each downward step.

As worldliness was the sin which thus secretly sapped the foundations of English society, the only cure lay in a return to the supernatural precepts of Christ's law. None could stand up more effectively for these than the men who had freed themselves from the world's shackles, and embracing holy poverty had taken up the Cross of Christ and followed Him. Accordingly, while nobles and bishops cringed to the king and readily obeyed his commands, the Observants boldly withstood him to his face. In the depths of their hearts the martyr-spirit had ever burnt brightly, and now that the martyr's crown was unexpectedly offered them they joyfully accepted it.

In 1519 Dr. Henry Standish, Provincial of the Order, was made Bishop of S. Asaph. He was after-

¹ Sander, *De Origine ac Progressu Schismatis Anglicani*, part i. p. 5, ed. Rishton, 1585.

² Hallam, *Constitutional Hist.* vol. i. chap. i. p. 23, ed. 1857.

wards one of the five bishops who, together with Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, were appointed to defend Catherine's marriage before the Legatine Commission.¹ He and all his Order supported her claims most zealously ; and as the king professed to be actuated by religious scruples alone, and it was essential to the success of his cause at Rome that his sincerity should not be doubted, it was impossible to check the freedom with which they openly discussed the question. In proportion, however, as the violence of Henry's passions grew stronger and the Pope's sentence was delayed, his irritation at their opposition increased.

The first sign of his displeasure was a letter which he wrote in 1532 to the Minister-General, Paul Pissotus, requesting him, for the sake of peace and good agreement between his majesty and the Observants in his kingdom, to depose the English Provincial and send Br. John de Haye, of the Province of Flanders, whom the king knew and liked, to be his Commissary and Provincial in the other's place. Pissotus answered that he had not the power to institute ministers of Provinces, but he would send De Haye to England as his Commissary. The records of the Order at this time being rather confused, it cannot be said positively who was the Provincial ; but it is believed to have been Dr. John Forest.² Forest had taken the habit at Greenwich when he was seventeen, and had afterwards studied at Oxford, where he distinguished himself by his talents and learning. He was appointed confessor to Queen Catherine, and when the divorce question came on he argued strenuously in her support. The king imputed Catherine's appeal to the Pope and her refusal to retire into a monastery to his influence and

¹ Sander, part i. p. 45.

² Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 227.

advice; and this alone would have been sufficient to account for Henry's request for his deposition.

In the following year, 1533, Henry, having no longer any hopes of gratifying his lawless passions by legitimate means, broke through all bounds, married Anne Boleyn, and on the 12th April 1533 brought her forward as his queen. As he had not yet been divorced from Catherine this marriage was obviously illegal, and therefore not binding. The Observants lost no time in remonstrating publicly with him while he was still free.

At this time the Guardian of the Grey Friars' Convent at Greenwich was F. William Peto or Peyton. He belonged to a family of some importance at Chesterton in Warwickshire. He took the habit and was educated in the convent at Oxford. He was remarkable for devotion and holy simplicity, and Queen Catherine, whose confessor he had been for some years, held him in high esteem. It happened that in one of the first days of May 1533 he was preaching on the 22d chapter of the 3d Book of Kings, in the presence of the king in the church at Greenwich. As he proceeded with the history of Achab he applied to the king the Prophet's threat, 'Where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall the dogs lick thy blood, even thine.' He tried to persuade the king to separate from Anne Boleyn; adding, 'I am that Micheas whom thou wilt hate, because I must tell thee truly that this marriage is unlawful. I know that I shall eat the bread of affliction and drink the water of sorrow, yet because our Lord hath put it into my mouth I must speak it. There are many other preachers, yea too many, who preach and persuade thee otherwise, feeding thy folly and frail affections upon hope of their own worldly promotion, and by that means betraying thy soul, thy honour, and thy posterity, to obtain fat benefices, to become rich

abbots, and get episcopal jurisdiction and other ecclesiastical dignities. These, I say, are the four hundred prophets who, in the spirit of lying, seek to deceive thee. But take good heed lest, being seduced, thou find Achab's punishment, and have thy blood licked up by the dogs. It is one of the greatest miseries of princes to be daily abused by flatterers.'

The king bore the reprimand quietly and did no violence to Peto. But the next Sunday, which was the 8th of May, Dr. Curwin preached in the same place, sharply reprimanding Peto and his preaching, calling him dog, slanderer, base beggarly friar, rebel and traitor, saying that no subject ought to speak so audaciously to princes, and much more to the same effect and in praise of the king's marriage, whereby his seed, he foretold, would be for ever established on the throne. Having thus, as he supposed, utterly crushed Peto and his brethren, he raised his voice and cried out, 'I speak to thee, Peto, who makest thyself Micheas, that thou mayest speak evil of kings, but art not now to be found, being fled for fear and shame at being unable to answer my arguments.' Whereupon Elstow, another friar, cried aloud from the rood-loft to Dr. Curwin, 'Good sir, thou knowest that F. Peto is now gone, as he was commanded, to a Provincial Council at Canterbury, and not fled from fear of thee; for to-morrow he will return. Meanwhile I am here as another Micheas, and I will lay down my life to prove the truth of all that he has taught out of the Holy Scriptures. To this combat I challenge thee before God and all impartial judges, even thee, Curwin, I say, who art one of the four hundred prophets into whom the spirit of lying is entered, and who seekest by adultery to establish the succession, betraying the king into endless perdition, more for thine own vain glory and hope of promotion than for the discharge of thy clogged conscience and

the king's salvation.' Thus Elstow waxed hot and spoke very earnestly, and they could not stop him till the king himself bade him hold his peace.¹

The next day Peto and Elstow were summoned before the king and his council. While they were waiting for the opening of the council Peto for a long time kept silence. At length, by way of rousing his courage, he said, as if in colloquy with himself, 'Speak, brother. I dare not. Wherefore art thou afraid? I fear the king. Indeed; and art thou not rather filled with horror and terror at the thought of God, the omnipotent King of kings? Whether it is right to fear a man rather than God, the Lord of lords, judge thou thyself, O king.' Thus he continued till the council was assembled.²

Undaunted by the reprimands of the council Peto defended his sermon, and even went on to predict that unless the king changed his conduct he would not have a male descendant to carry on his royal line. Cromwell, the king's principal minister, said that he and Elstow deserved to be put into a sack and thrown into the Thames. Whereupon Elstow, smiling, answered, 'My lord, be pleased to frighten with such threats your court epicures, men who have lost their courage in their palate, and softened their minds with pomp and pleasure. Such people, who are tied by their senses close to the world, are most likely to yield to your menaces; but they make no impression upon us. We count it an honour to suffer for our duty, and bless God for keeping us firm under trial; and as for your Thames, the road to heaven lies as near by water as by land, and therefore it is indifferent to us which way we go thither.' After they had been severely reproved by the council they were dismissed. They soon after went abroad, and remained there till Queen Mary's reign.

¹ Stow, p. 562.

² *Certamen Seraphicum*, p. 11.

Heedless of these remonstrances Henry advanced in his wicked course. In May Cranmer declared the marriage with Catherine null and void, and her daughter Mary's right of succession to the throne was set aside.¹ The Pope annulled Cranmer's sentence, and excommunicated Henry and Anne unless they separated before September; but he afterwards extended the time till the end of October. Still Henry was unmoved. Far from repenting, he threw off the Pope's authority, declared himself sole head of the Church in England, and resolved to crush all who would not acknowledge his right to this title.

F. Forest was now thrown into prison, some say because in the king's presence he had opposed Latimer when he was inveighing against the Pope.² But others mention as the more probable cause of his imprisonment³ that one of the courtiers went to him for confession with a treacherous design, and professing to be troubled at Henry's having imperilled his salvation by usurping the authority of Christ's Vicar, drew on the holy priest to confirm his pretended opinion with many learned and scriptural arguments. From the confessional the sacrilegious traitor went to the king and denounced his confessor. Forest was seized, thrown into Newgate, loaded with chains, and most barbarously tortured.⁴ After his constancy had been tried for some days by these sufferings and all

¹ Burnet, part i. book iii. p. 219.

² Sander, ap. Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 228. F. Parkinson appears to have quoted from the original edition of Sander.

³ Danielle, *Martirio e Morte d'alcuni Frati di San Francesco*, chap. vii. p. 16, which is a translation of F. Thomas Bouchier's *Historia Ecclesiastica de Martirio Fratrum Ordinis Minorum Divi Franciscæ*; Burnet, part i. book iii. p. 561; Wood, *Athen. Oxon.* vol. i. p. 108, ed. Bliss, 1813.

⁴ Wadding, *Annales Fratrum Minorum*, vol. xvi. p. 490.

the hardships then involved in imprisonment, he was brought before the king and council. He answered all their questions with great intrepidity; and when they urged him to retract his former opinion and declare the king the head of the English Church, he repeated over and over again that he was ready to suffer the most cruel death rather than depart in the smallest tittle from the Catholic faith. Even Henry was touched with remorse by his undaunted bearing and his powerful arguments, as was by no means unusual to him; but the stings of his conscience were quickly stifled, and Forest was sent back to Newgate.

The Observants soon fell into even deeper disgrace. For the last seven years there had been in the Priory of S. Sepulchre at Canterbury a nun called Elizabeth Barton. She was quite uneducated, and had been a servant at a farmhouse in the village of Aldington in Kent; but having been miraculously cured by our Blessed Lady she had devoted herself to God's service in religion. She soon gained such a reputation for sanctity that she was generally known as the Holy Maid of Kent. She was favoured with revelations from God, and in obedience to them she constantly reproved the vices of the times and induced many priests and other pious persons to adopt a very austere life. Cardinal Wolsey was admonished by her as to the performance of his legatine duties. Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, thought very highly of her. Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, and Sir Thomas More examined her closely, and could find no trace of delusion or imposture in her; and the Observants and many other pious and learned priests believed that she was inspired by the Holy Ghost. Some time before Henry declared Anne Boleyn queen she had a revelation, ordering her to go and tell him 'that if he went forward with the purpose that he intended, he would not be King of England seven months later;'

at the same time giving it to be understood that 'this punishment would be brought about, not by any temporal or worldly power, but by God alone.'¹

This revelation was now fulfilled in an unexpected way. For when October was ended and seven months had passed since Henry had carried out the wicked purpose that he had intended, he was excommunicated, and therefore, according to the law of all Christendom, which was then also the law of England, he had forfeited all his civil rights and was no longer a lawful king, though his subjects, not having been freed by the Pope from their allegiance, were still bound to obey him. The nun had now a second revelation, which said 'that Henry was no longer a king, because he reigned not of God, and that Mary, the daughter of Catherine, then regarded as one born out of lawful wedlock, would ascend the throne in her own right.'²

Henry had not heeded her first prophecy. But now he was really alarmed, because there was already a great stir in the nation about his revolt from the Church's authority and his treatment of Catherine. He therefore threw the nun into the Tower, together with two Observants, Hugh Rich, Guardian of Canterbury, and Richard Risby, Guardian of Richmond, two Benedictine monks, Edward Bocking and John Dering, and two secular priests, Richard Masters, Rector of Aldington, and Henry Gold, Rector of Aldermary in London, all of whom were supposed to be her principal advisers. After being examined several times they were sentenced to stand on a scaffold at

¹ Fisher's letter to the House of Lords, Cotton MS., Cleop. E vi. fol. 165, ap. Collier, part ii. book ii. vol. iv. p. 247, ed. Barham. As Fisher heard this from her own lips, and his letter would necessarily be seen by the king, his version of her revelation must be the true one.

² Sander, p. 74.

S. Paul's Cross while the Bishop of Bangor preached against them ; and after the sermon the king's officers gave each of them a bill of confession, which they handed to the preacher, who read them out as being their confessions.¹ But it was soon spread abroad that these confessions had not been their own free act, and the nun was detected sending messages to her friends to 'animate them to adhere to her and to her prophecies.'²

Meanwhile Henry, fearing that some conspiracy might be hatching against him, set on foot inquiries throughout the kingdom. But not a trace of any thing of the kind could be discovered. He found out, however, that wherever the Observants went about preaching they defended the Pope's authority and the lawfulness of his marriage with Catherine, and that the whole nation agreed with them. With the view of striking terror into the friars and all others who should oppose his will, he resolved to put the nun and the six priests to death. They were all attainted of treason in Parliament, though no treason had been discovered against them ; and without any trial they were condemned to die. At the same time a bill was passed through Parliament, making it treason to say anything against the king's marriage with Anne Boleyn and the succession of her children to the throne, or in defence of the Pope's authority. Thus that which was not treason was declared to be treason ; and not only the nun and her friends, but all good Catholics were declared guilty of treason and were liable to be punished as traitors. Common sense tells us that an act of Parliament cannot make anything that which it is not. Treason consists in rebelling or conspiring against the king. As

¹ Burnet, vol. i. book ii. p. 251.

² Rolls MS., ap. Froude, Hist. Eng. vol. ii chap. vii. p. 168.

the nun and her friends and other good Catholics neither rebelled nor conspired, they were not guilty of treason, and therefore they were unjustly punished as traitors.

On the 20th April 1534 the nun and the six priests were drawn on hurdles from the Tower to Tyburn, and as the hurdles had no wheels they were bruised and bespattered with mud as they were dragged along the rough and stony ground.¹ The mob believing they were really traitors, mocked and insulted them; but they bore the revilings with extraordinary patience and magnanimity. At Tyburn they beheld a scaffold on which stood a high gallows, and at its foot a caldron full of boiling water, an axe, and a huge knife, as if intended to strike them with terror. The holy maid was the first who was hanged and beheaded. Then F. Rich, Guardian of Canterbury, mounted the ladder; and while his foot was on it a messenger from the king arrived and offered him life and liberty if he would throw off the Pope's authority. But he instantly answered, 'Not only will I not rebel against the authority of the Pope, but I am ready to suffer the most cruel death for Holy Mother Church.' The executioner then seized him. While the rope was being placed round his neck he repeatedly exclaimed, 'I will freely sacrifice to Thee and will give praise, O God, to Thy name, for it is good.'²

He was thrown from the ladder, and the rope being instantly cut, he was ripped open while still alive, his palpitating heart was held up to the people with the insulting words, 'Behold the heart of a traitor!' after which it and all his entrails were thrown into the fire. Finally, his head was cut off, and his body was divided into four quarters, which were thrown into the caldron of boiling water to preserve them for a time from corruption.

¹ Stow, Chronicle, p. 571.

² Ps. liii. 8.

As soon as this cruel butchery was completed F. Risby, Guardian of Richmond, mounted the ladder. Life and liberty were offered to him also if he would acknowledge the king's supremacy, and many of those who stood by tried to persuade him to consent, and not to end his days in so shameful a manner. But far from being moved by their entreaties he laughed at their words as if they were a joke; as indeed they were to a son of S. Francis, whose life had been a long aspiration for suffering and the crown of martyrdom. When his resolution was found to be immovable the executioner seized him violently, dashed him from the ladder, instantly cut the rope, and throwing him quite alive on the ground, began to rip him up. As the man, groping through his entrails, seized his heart, F. Risby said to him, 'That which thou hast in thy hands is consecrated to God.' His heart was then torn out, held up to the crowd and thrown into the fire. His head was cut off, and his body was quartered and thrown into the boiling caldron. The two Benedictine monks and the two secular priests suffered in like manner. Finally, the nun's head was placed on a pole on London Bridge, and the heads and quarters of the other martyrs on the gates of the city.

Thus opened the great persecution which was to last for nearly three centuries. On this solemn occasion the whole English Church was fitly represented. The nun took precedence, as if in honour of the Queen of Martyrs, and the sons of S. Francis stood side by side with the descendants of S. Gregory and S. Augustine, and with the secular clergy. As in primitive ages a single grain of incense thrown on the idol's altar, so now a single word against the Pope, would have rescued the martyrs from torture and death. But the incense and the sacrilegious word were alike refused. The distinctive feature of the

English martyrdom was that the martyrs suffered, not for any abstract controversial point of doctrine, but simply for the authority of the Pope. As the early Christians died solely for their faith in Christ, so the English Catholics died solely for their faith in Christ's Vicar.

CHAPTER VI.

PERSECUTION UNDER HENRY VIII.

ABOUT three months after the martyrdom of the Holy Maid of Kent and her spiritual advisers, the Observants' Convent at Richmond was visited in the king's name by Lee, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, and Thomas Bedyll, Secretary to Cromwell. They ordered the friars to swear, that by the law of God the Pope had no greater jurisdiction in the kingdom than any other foreign Bishop. This, they said, had been sworn to by several Bishops, heads of houses, and other learned clerks of the realm; and they desired the friars to refer the matter to four seniors of their house, and to acquiesce in whatever they should decide. But the friars answered that it concerned their consciences and therefore they would not submit it to a small part of their house; adding that they had sworn to follow the rule of S. Francis, a chapter of which said, 'That their Order should have a Cardinal for their protector, by whose directions they were to be governed in their obedience to the Holy See;' and in that rule they would live and die. In vain the Bishop argued with them. They all maintained firmly that they had professed S. Francis's rule, and would still continue to observe it.

The fate of the Observants was now sealed. On the 11th of August 1534, above a year before any other Order was touched, they were turned out of their

house at Greenwich, and shortly after out of all their other houses in the kingdom. Their Order was suppressed: some of the friars were sent into the houses of the Conventuals, to whom they were made subject; a few escaped abroad; but the greater number were thrown into prison. The only person who dared to say a word for them was Sir Thomas Wriothesley, a privy councillor and one of their benefactors, who interceded for them with the king, holding out the hope that possibly in time some of them might submit.

The example of the Observants gave courage to others. At the same time the king's rage became more and more excited by indulgence. On the 4th of May and the 18th of June the Charterhouse monks were executed. On the 22d of June Cardinal Fisher was beheaded, and Sir Thomas More on the 1st of July. Standish, Bishop of S. Asaph, escaped a similar doom only through his death, which took place at this time.

F. Forest, who had been imprisoned in Newgate for two years, was now condemned to death. The immediate cause of his condemnation was his having written a book styled *Of the Authority of the Church and of the Pope*, the opening words of which were, 'Let no man assume to himself the honour, unless he be called as Aaron.' In this book he reproved the pride and impiety of the king, because, without any call from God, he did not scruple to entitle himself the head of the Church in England and to take upon him that of which he was not capable; whereas if he had wished to be a true member of the Catholic Church, he ought to have given God thanks that he was such, and remained humbly in the Church, instead of trying to tear it to pieces. This book came to the king's knowledge and was an unpardonable addition to F. Forest's offences. On his refusal to retract it he was

condemned to die, and only allowed a few days to make his peace with God and man.¹

Great was Queen Catherine's sorrow on hearing of his condemnation. Moved with the most tender compassion for her spiritual father, she wrote him the following letter, though at great risk to herself :

‘ My Reverend Father,—You who have been accustomed to give advice to others under hard circumstances cannot be at a loss for what is most proper to be suggested to yourself now you are to be put to the tryal for Christ's cause. If you bear these few and short torments whereunto you are condemned, you will (as you know very wel) receive an everlasting reward, which, whosoever will choose to lose for any tribulation of this life, seems to be wholly void of all sence and reason. But, O you, my happy father, to whom God has granted the blessing of knowing this above many mortals, and of finishing your life and the course of your labours by these chains, by these torments, and by this most cruel death for Christ ! And, O me, your wretched daughter, who, in this sad time of my distress and solitude, am to be deprived of such a monitor and a father so beloved in the bowels of Jesus Christ ! And truly, if I may freely confess my most earnest desires in this matter to you, to whom I have always (as I ought) laid open all the secrets of my very heart and conscience, I acknowledge to you that my most ardent wishes are to die with you, or before you, and that also with the greatest torments imaginable, provided it were pleasing to the Divine Will, to whom I always submit all my desires most willingly, as also my life itself. For far am I from any enjoyment of this unhappy world after those are gone whom the world was not worthy of. But perhaps I have talked like one of the foolish women,

¹ Wood, Athen. Oxon. vol. i. p. 108.

since God seems to have so decreed it. Go before me, therefore, my Reverend Father, happily and courageously, and importune Christ in your prayers that by this though difficult way I may soon, without fear, follow you. And in the mean time I desire this as your last blessing in this life, that I may be a partaker of your holy labours, of your torments, and of your conflicts; and after your suffering and your crown, I shall expect more plentiful favours from heaven by your intercession. I think it superfluous to animate you to that immortal reward preferable to all other goods, though purchased with the most excessive pains,—you who, by your birth, are intitled to a generous mind; you who are endowed with such an excellent knowledge of Divine mysteries; you who, from your very youth, have (which is the main) been trained up in the holy religion and profession of a Franciscan. Yet, since to suffer for good's sake is the greatest happiness bestowed upon man in this life, I will implore His Divine Majesty, with continual prayers, tears, and penitential labours, that you may happily finish your course, and may obtain a never-fading crown of eternal life. Farewel, my Reverend Father, and be always mindful of me with God, both on earth and in heaven.

‘Your sorrowfull daughter,

‘CATHERINE.’¹

The martyr received this letter with great joy, and having succeeded in getting paper and secured an opportunity for sending his answer, he wrote to the queen as follows:

‘Most serene Princess, my sovereign Queen, and my Daughter in Jesus Christ,—Your majesty’s servant delivered to me your most gracious letter, which

¹ Collect. Angl.-Minor, p. 234.

was not only a great joy and consolation to me, but also a fresh encouragement to patience and constancy in this my affliction and continual expectation of death; for though I plainly see that not only all perishing goods, but likewise all the miseries and evils of this world, are to be despised for the future glory which will be revealed in us if we fight a good fight, yet I find my soul—which (as 'tis usual with human nature on the like occasions) was somewhat heavy and pensive on the near view of death, and not without some fear and solicitude on the consideration of its own unworthiness and frailty—is now enlivened by those most pious expressions of your great charity, and wonderfully animated in the contempt of all torments, and inspirited with a fresh fervour in the hopes and contemplation of future joys. My sovereign lady and well-beloved daughter, may Jesus Christ reward your goodness with eternal glory and bliss for this consolation! and I do most earnestly beseech you to recommend my approaching sufferings, conflict, and agony to the Divine mercy, and to assist me therein by your continual prayers. And for the rest, I do most humbly entreat you not to doubt of my constancy, nor to be troubled for the grievousness of the torments appointed for me; for it does not become my gray hairs to be disturbed in God's cause with such childish bugbears; it does not become a man to fly from death basely after he has lived sixty-four years; much less does it become a religious man not to love God and with his utmost endeavours aspire to heavenly things after he has been for four-and-forty years in the habit of S. Francis, learning and teaching the contempt of all that is earthly. I will be mindful of you, my sovereign lady and daughter in Christ, both in this life and in the next, and will never cease from praying to the God of mercy to give you, according to the greatness of your sorrows, all grace and comfort. In the

mean time, vouchsafe to pray most earnestly for me, your devoted servant and beadsman, especially at that hour when you shall understand I am to be labouring under those dreadful torments prepared for me. I presume to make you a poor present of my beads, having, as 'tis given out, but three days longer to live on earth,' &c.¹

Mrs. Elizabeth Hammond, one of the queen's ladies of honour, also wrote to F. Forest :

'My most worshipful Father,—The sorrow which my most serene queen and I feel on hearing of your severe and acute sufferings is quite incredible, and all the more because we are deprived of all consolation, so that her majesty never ceases to weep and does nothing but pray. I conjure you, if it be possible through any of your friends to obtain your liberty, let us not be deprived of you ; for her majesty is so deeply moved by this great affliction that I fear lest she should fall ill and die. Moreover, the fury of the king is so great that her majesty can scarcely bear it. On Monday last the ministers of the king came here, seeking for we know not what, and frightened us so dreadfully that we did not know what course to follow ; and even now we have no idea what was the king's intention in thus terrifying us. I entreat you to pray God for me and for my companion, Dorothea Lichfield, who salutes you with all her heart.'²

To this letter F. Forest replied :

'My daughter, Elizabeth Hammond,—I am certainly grieved at your great sorrow and that of your lady on account of my sufferings, as if there were

¹ Collect. Angl.-Minor. p. 235.

² Danielle, chap. x. p. 27.

not a resurrection to glory. In truth this is not what I have often taught you amongst other acts of piety ; and even should I ever have taught it you, you know that then I committed a great sin. If through fear of torments or love of the riches of this world, I would cast my faith behind my back and give myself a prey to the devil by consenting to that which I ought not, there is no doubt that I should be free. But let not such a thought ever enter your heart. Rather learn to suffer for the truth of Christ's faith, and even to die for the Catholic Spouse, your Mother ; and seek not to withdraw me from these torments, by means of which I hope to obtain eternal blessedness. I entreat you to follow in the footsteps of the queen, your lady, and to pray God for me that the torments which are destined for me may be increased, for they are little to obtain the glory of God.¹

Dr. Thomas Abel, who had been the queen's confidential chaplain and one of the theologians appointed to defend her before the Legatine Commission,² had been sent to the Tower with Bishop Fisher and several ecclesiastics on the very day that the Holy Maid of Kent and the first martyrs had suffered.³ He had now been above a year in prison. He had been tortured thirty-seven times, and his patience was well-nigh exhausted,—not that he dreamt of giving up a single iota of the faith, but he longed to be released to enjoy the Beatific Vision. He wrote at this time the following letter to F. Forest :

‘Very Reverend Father,—Although human nature is terrified by the intensity of tortures, yet our faith demands and requires us to bear them. I said, “My foot is moved because Thou hast turned away Thy

¹ Danielle, chap. x. p. 28.

² Sander, part i. p. 45.

³ Stow, p. 571.

face from me." But wherefore this delay to one who eagerly longs for that supreme blessedness? O blessed face, in which is the fullness of joy! Whence David says, "I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear."¹ But "Thou turnedst away Thy face from me, and I became troubled;"² troubled, I say, because the pain of the tortures which I desire is prolonged; it is prolonged, and at the same time I am humbled; humbled and not raised up, because not drawn to my Saviour; not drawn, because I am burdened with the weight of my sins; burdened and not refreshed by Him. What then profits my condemnation if there be longer to wait? "With expectation I have waited for the Lord,"³ and He has not heard me. Wherefore, I ask? Because you have not implored the mercy of God with such a multitude of prayers as would have availed me. For I know of how much weight is the prayer of the just man before God; "Because with the Lord there is mercy; and with Him plentiful redemption."⁴ "In Thee have our fathers hoped; they have hoped, and Thou hast delivered them,"⁵ for the sake of David Thy servant. Why then is not an end put to these tortures? I have now suffered seven-and-thirty days, and I find no rest. But my hope is that we shall die together by the same punishment. Let us die, I pray, that we may live with Him, to whom, Martyr of all Martyrs, I commend you earnestly in my prayers. Farewell, and pray for me.'

To this letter F. Forest returned the following answer :

'Very excellent Sir,—In proportion to the clearness of knowledge will be the fruition of joy and of

¹ Ps. xvi. 15.

² Ps. xxix. 1.

⁴ Ps. cxxix. 7.

² Ps. xxix. 8.

⁵ Ps. xxi. 5.

the eternal abode. Whence S. Augustine says in the book *Of the City of God*, there are many mansions in one house, there will also be various ranks of rewards; but where God will be all in all, He will also be in different degrees of clearness through joy, in order that what each has may through joy be common to all; because the glory of the Head will be that of all through the bond of love, and thus each will rejoice at the happiness of others as if he himself possessed it. Count not your tortures, my son, for that is to add pain to pain; but rather, as S. Paul says, "Reckon the sufferings of this time not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us."¹ To whose words may well be added those of the prophet who says to our Lord, "For a thousand years in Thy sight are as yesterday, which is past."² If you bear patiently the tortures that are inflicted on you, doubt not of your reward. Of which the Psalmist says, "I have inclined my heart to do Thy justifications for ever, for the reward."³ O blessed and thrice-happy reward, which God gives to those who fear Him. Whence we pray, "Lord, reward Thy servant." But only on the condition, "I have kept Thy words." If, therefore, there is a reward for keeping the words of the Lord, keep them, my son. But you will ask, "How long?" To the end. For our Saviour says, "He that shall endure unto the end, he shall be saved."⁴ Therefore, neither the tortures of thirty-seven days, nor of a thousand years, but the last end, will crown your combat. With labourers the work of a single day does not satisfy for a whole year; nor do those who are sent on military service to Rome receive as much as those who go to Jerusalem. If you take such care to follow to Rome,

¹ Rom. viii. 18.² Ps. lxxxix. 4.³ Ps. cxviii. 112.⁴ S. Mark xiii. 13.

think you not of going on to Jerusalem? Jerusalem, I say, which is the City of the great King,¹ in her houses you will know when you attain to her; to her, I say, in whom is the highest peace and the greatest tranquillity. Think you, my son, that we shall run together, and rejoice in the same punishment, and drink of the same chalice? A greater combat awaits me; but for you lighter sufferings remain. Whatever they be, act manfully, our Lord supporting you. Farewell.²

When these letters were written it was supposed that F. Forest would have received his crown before the queen. But God had appointed otherwise. His execution was put off for about three years, while her majesty's days of sorrows were shortened. She died at Kimbolton in Huntingdonshire, in January 1536, in the fiftieth year of her age and the thirty-third after her arrival in England. On her death-bed she asked to see her daughter, who had been separated from her ever since Cranmer had pronounced her marriage null and void. But Henry would not grant her last request to him.³ She ordered that she should be buried in a convent of the Observants, who had done and suffered the most for her.⁴ But the king would not allow her last wishes to be carried out, and by his command she was buried in the abbey church of Peterborough.⁵

In spite, however, of bloodshed and cruelty, there was still a great stir throughout the nation on account of the change of religion. Then it was suggested that there was no other way of supporting the king

¹ Ps. xlvii. 3.

² Wadding, vol. xvi. p. 393.

³ Cardinal Pole. *Apol. ad Cæsar*, p. 162.

⁴ Burnet, part i. book iii. p. 308.

⁵ Herbert, *Life of Henry VIII.* ap. Kennet, vol. ii. p. 188.

in his assumed supremacy than by getting rid of the monks, who were a body of reserve for the Pope and were always ready to support his claims; besides which, there were amongst them many men of talent and learning, who might prove troublesome. Moreover, the king's revenue did not cover his lavish expenditure. He did not wish to lay more taxes on his subjects, whom he had already heavily burdened, and the suppression of the monasteries was thought to be the easiest way of raising money.¹ Accordingly, in 1536 all the religious communities whose income was less than two hundred a year were dissolved and their property was seized. The Conventual Grey Friars, however, were exempted from this first storm, for the evident reason that 'there was nothing to be got by their ruin, forasmuch as they had no endowments of lands,'² or other property. They were therefore allowed to breathe for three years longer.

But though the Bishops and higher clergy deemed it prudent to be silent spectators, and the nobles urged on the king in hopes of sharing the plunder, the people, who had been well grounded by the friars in their knowledge and love of the faith, rose in arms in the northern and eastern counties, not against the king—their loyalty to whom was most remarkable—but against the unprincipled councillors who alone, they fancied, could have devised so much wickedness. After first pacifying and dispersing them by characteristic double-dealing Henry turned upon them with sanguinary fury. Amid the indifference or even flattering applause of his court, his 'fierce temper, strengthened by habit and exasperated by resistance, demanded more constant supplies of

¹ Collier, vol. iv. part ii. l. ii. p. 290; Burnet, part i. book iii. p. 305.

² Dugdale, vol. vi. p. 1534.

blood ;¹ and the rest of his reign was but a series of cruel butchery and violence.

In 1534 two hundred Observants had been thrown at once into prison ; and since then, as occasion served, all the rest in England had been shut up. Gladly would the king have hanged them all, but he feared the infamy that he would incur by such an act. Already there was such widespread discontent and such loud outcries, even at the court, on account of their cruel treatment, that it was necessary to get rid of them more quietly. Accordingly some of them were starved to death, others were tortured till they expired, and a great number, coupled two and two, were sent into distant prisons in order that they might there perish with less notice. How many were thus disposed of we do not know. The Franciscan Menologium commemorates, on the 27th of September 1537, thirty-four friars and 'others not a few.' The Franciscan Martyrology commemorates, on the 31st of July 1538, thirty-two who had been removed into distant prisons during the preceding years, and had sunk under hard usage. Sander mentions twenty-two who died in one prison or another.² Another contemporary writer says there was an 'immense number' of them, and that all perished either on the scaffold or by starvation, or through their sufferings in prison.³ But though it is doubtful when, how, or in what numbers the Observants suffered, yet it is undoubted that all of them remained firm to the very last, and that neither now nor in the following reign did a single one of them fall away from the faith. We hear of the release of only eight friars,

¹ Hallam, *Constitut. Hist.* vol. i. chap. i. p. 27, ed. 1857.

² *Collect. Angl.-Minor.* part i. p. 244.

³ *Contemporary Account of Fisher and More* preserved in the Vatican, ap. Pocock, *Records of the Reformation*, vol. ii. p. 562.

who were banished to Scotland or Germany.¹ But four of these — Thomas Packington, Bonaventure Roo, John Tuit, and Richard Carter—had undergone such hardships in prison, that all four died a few days after their release.²

The friars who had escaped to Flanders and other places abroad were looked on with great veneration, as confessors for the faith. F. Peto went to Rome, where he was made Custos of the Hospital of the Most Holy Trinity of S. Thomas. In 1544, the bishopric of Salisbury falling vacant, it was conferred on him by the Pope, and on John Capon, *alias* Salcot, by the king.³ F. Henry Holstam went to the Netherlands, where he was held in such esteem that in 1544 he was made Visitor of the Province of Brabant, and in 1549 Minister Provincial. Other English friars distinguished themselves so greatly as lecturers of divinity in the Franciscan convent of Louvain, that F. Pinchartius, Minister Provincial in the following century, said to F. Francis a Sancta Clara Davenport, that they were indebted to the English for their learning.⁴ Many of the friars escaped to Ireland, where they were received with characteristic hospitality. In return they picked up the language with a quickness which their hosts deemed quite supernatural, and went about the country instructing the people and strengthening their faith to meet the persecution which a few years after was extended to them.

The following are the only martyrdoms of which any details have reached us :

¹ Wadding, vol. xvi. p. 419.

² Franciscan Martyrology, August 9, ap. Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 238.

³ The Episcopal Succession, by W. Maziere Brady, vol. i. p. 5.

⁴ Hist. Min. Provin. Angl. p. 55, ap. Collect. Angl.-Minor. p. 247.

F. Anthony Brockbey, or Brorbey, was Professor of Divinity in Magdalen College, Oxford. He was very learned in Greek and Hebrew and was distinguished as an eloquent preacher. One day as he was preaching in the Church of S. Lawrence in London, he inveighed strongly against the king's late proceedings. He was consequently taken up by his majesty's express command and was thrown into a loathsome dungeon. Here he was placed on the rack in order to induce him to retract his words. But he bore all the tortures with wonderful courage and constancy; and far from yielding a single point, he only expressed an ardent desire to suffer yet more cruel torments for the love of God. So unusually barbarous was his racking that every joint in his body was dislocated, and he could not move, or even raise his hand to his mouth. For five-and-twenty days a devout old woman charitably waited on him and fed him. At the end of that time, on the 19th July 1537, an executioner came to him by the king's command, and as he lay in bed strangled him with the cord which he wore for a girdle.¹

On the 27th of the same month F. Thomas Cort ended his life in prison. He is described as a man of noble lineage, but still more noble through the eloquence and zeal which led him, at the peril of his life, to preach openly against the king's conduct in the matter of the divorce and his assumption of the supremacy of the Church in England. He was seized while he was preaching in the Church of S. Lawrence, and was thrown into Newgate. He was put into the cell with thieves, murderers, and the worst criminals, thus walking in the footsteps of Him to whose example he had vowed himself, and 'who was numbered with the transgressors.' Here, partly

¹ Danielle, chap. ii. p. 6; Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 239.

through the filth and fetid air of the gaol and partly through starvation, he closed his life. But at his departure, in order that his sanctity might be known to all, the whole prison was lit up with a heavenly and miraculous light. The king was greatly troubled when this circumstance came to his knowledge, and he desired him to be decently buried. He was therefore laid in the churchyard of S. Sepulchre, near the great door of the church, and a stone with an epitaph asking for the prayers of passers-by, which was still standing in 1607, was placed over him by a devout matron, Margaret, the wife of a certain Herbert, a shopkeeper of Ghent.¹

On the 3d of the following August F. Thomas Belchiam died of starvation in prison. He was a very learned man and a great preacher; and though only twenty-eight years of age he distinguished himself by the zeal and courage with which he opposed the king's proceedings. In order to give the greater force to his bold assertions, he wrote a book addressed to his brethren on the text, 'They that wear soft clothing are in king's houses.'² In this work he pointed out the manner of life too common in the courts of great princes, which ordinarily are such a filthy sink of vice as to give rise to the threadbare proverb, 'He that will be godly must depart the court;' where, so far from finding examples of religious deportment, licentiousness and vices of all sorts and degrees bud forth and grow up luxuriantly. He also inveighed against the avarice of the English clergy, expressing his detestation of this vice in those who ought to outdo all others in hospitality and charitable liberality. Nor did he spare the Bishops, whom he reproached with cowardice and worldliness, since for temporal advan-

¹ Danielle, chap. iii. p. 7 ; Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 239.

² Matt. xi. 8.

tages and the goods of this perishing life they chose rather to incur the anger of God Himself than lay open the plain truth to the king, as, even at the risk of death, they were bound in duty to do. One copy of this book, which is said to have been a very learned work, he placed in the hands of his brethren at Greenwich, who when they were turned adrift carefully preserved it, intending to have it printed. But F. Angelus Mason says that he could never hear of its having been published, and the ms. was unhappily lost.¹ The other copy he took with him to prison. Here while he was being starved to death every sort of torture was inflicted upon him, his tormentors frequently varying their proceedings in the hope of tiring him out with the constant succession of different sufferings. But through them all he conquered, and closed his life only the more triumphantly. When he was reduced to skin and bone and was at the point of expiring in the Christian hope of eternal glory through the merits of Christ, he commended his soul to God in the words, 'In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust, let me never be confounded.' As he expired the gaol shook as if with an earthquake, and the keepers were terrified. The king, too, was startled by this supernatural manifestation and ordered him to be decently buried. The copy of his book which he had with him in prison was carried to the king, who, as he read it, was struck with such remorse that he burst out weeping and bitterly lamented his own misery. The good impression, however, was of no long continuance. Soon hardening his heart he ordered the book to be burnt. But the king's jester, William Sommer, who had never had the use of reason, ran through all the king's court, exclaiming vehemently, 'The plain dealing of one beggar baffles the king's anger.'²

¹ *Certamen Seraphicum*, p. 345.

² *Danielle*, chap. v. p. 9 ; *Col. Angl.-Minor*. part i. p. 240.

F. Francis Waire, also, was hanged at S. Thomas Watering's in 1539, but we know nothing more about him.

Though several years had passed away since F. Forest's execution had been put off, yet it is not to be supposed that he had been forgotten. Attempts were constantly renewed, whether by torture or by offers of life and worldly wealth and honours, to induce him to acknowledge the king's supremacy. But in vain. He always answered firmly that he was ready to suffer the greatest torments rather than offend God by acquiescing in the king's usurpation of the Pope's divinely appointed authority. He added that all this storm had arisen in the nation through the national sins, the most severe punishment of which was that God had abandoned it and allowed it to fall away. He accused himself for his own sins and those of the people, and used the prayer, 'Spare, Lord, spare Thy people.' At length, on the 22d May 1538, he was drawn on a hurdle to Smithfield, where there was a high scaffold, on which sat the king's council and principal nobles, who were authorised to pardon him if he showed any spark of repentance. There was also a pulpit from which Latimer, now Bishop of Worcester, preached to him. But utterly unmoved, he disputed with Latimer and answered him so forcibly from Scripture that his opponent had not a word to say in reply, and the people around began to whisper at his confusion. Whereupon Latimer, as his last refuge, called out, 'Burn him, burn him; for his words prove that he deserves death.' Finally, Latimer asked him in what state he would die. Whereupon Forest answered in a loud voice, so as to be heard by the surrounding crowd, 'Were an angel to come down from heaven to teach me any other doctrine than that which I have received and believed from my youth, I would not believe him; and if my body should be cut

joint after joint, or member after member, hanged, burnt, or whatever pains soever might be inflicted on me, I would never turn from my old profession.' He added, 'Seven years past thou, Latimer, durst not for thy life have preached such a sermon as thou hast just spoken.'¹ He was now conducted from the high scaffold on which he stood to the gallows which had been erected over a great pile of fagots and straw. On seeing the tortures that had been prepared for him, he cried out in a loud voice with undaunted courage, 'O Lord God, neither fire, nor gallows, nor any torments whatsoever, shall separate me from Thee.' An iron chain was then passed round his waist and under his armpits, and he was hung up over the fire which scarcely reached to his feet. The wind being high the flames were sometimes blown away, so as greatly to lengthen his agony. But he bore his sufferings with wonderful intrepidity and patience, constantly repeating, 'In the shadow of Thy wings will I hope, until iniquity pass away.'² After he had thus hung for a considerable time, some of the crowd, either wearied with the protracted spectacle or touched with compassion at his intense sufferings, pushed down the gibbet, so that both he and it fell into the fire and he passed quickly out of the power of his tormentors to receive his crown of glory in Paradise. The fire which consumed him was made in great part of a crucifix of unusual size, called Darvel Gathren, which had been held in great veneration in South Wales, and to which was attached an old prophecy, that it would one day set a forest on fire.

This unusually cruel execution, which so remarkably fulfilled F. Forest's prophecy of the 'greater combat' that awaited him, must no doubt have come

¹ Wood, Athen. Oxon. vol. i. p. 109, ed. Bliss, 1813.

² Ps. lvi. 2.

to the ears of Dr. Abel, who was still languishing in the Tower. But far from intimidating him, it only revived his hope and assurance of the 'lighter sufferings' that remained for himself, as had at the same time been foretold. The long trial of his patience, however, was not yet over. As year after year had slowly worn away, the over-eagerness of natural desire which appears in his letter to F. Forest had been supernaturalised, and as his love had grown in depth and intensity he had become willing to await his Lord's own time to crown his combat. At length, in the year 1540, he, Richard Fetherston, and Edward Powell, priests, were attainted for denying the king's supremacy and adhering to the Pope,¹ and on the 31st July they were led out to execution. Fetherston and Powell had formerly been associated with him as theologians for Queen Catherine's defence, they had been imprisoned about the same time as he, and they were now to share his victory. In grim mockery three Protestants, Barnes, Gerrard, and Jerome, who were attainted for heresy, were led out with them, a Catholic and a Protestant being coupled together on each hurdle. On arriving at Smithfield the three Catholics were hanged, drawn, and quartered, and the three Protestants were burnt. A Frenchman who stood by, on beholding this odd exhibition of fanciful cruelty, could not refrain from saying to a friend in Latin, 'They have a strange way of managing in England; for those who are for the Pope are hanged, and those who are against him are burnt.'²

Once more the Grey Friars stood at the head of the sufferers for religion through the spoiling of their goods. In September 1538, seven months before the general spoliation of the religious Orders, the houses

¹ Burnet, vol. i. book iii. p. 566.

² Collier, vol. v. part ii. book iii. p. 80; Stow, p. 581; Sander, part i. p. 97.

and all the property of the Conventual Grey Friars were confiscated. The Black Friars, the White Friars, the Charterhouse Monks, the Community of the Hospital of S. Thomas Akres, and that of S. Augustine's Abbey at Canterbury, were at the same time robbed of their property.

The Grey Friars' house in London was used as a wine-store, and in the year 1544, when three hundred French ships had been captured, their church was full of wine. In 1546 the church was reopened, and the Bishop of Rochester preached at S. Paul's Cross, declaring that the king, for the relief of the poor, had given the church with the ground and all the buildings on it to the city of London. But as all these were valued at no more then 32*l.* 19*s.* per annum, though the enclosure was large and the offices many, the king, intending to make it a parish church, was forced to add to it S. Bartholomew's Hospital in Smithfield, lately valued at 305*l.* 6*s.* 7*d.*, and the church of the same, also the parishes of S. Nicholas and S. Ewin, and so much of the parish of S. Pulcher's as is within Newgate, and five hundred marks yearly for ever in land, which were all made into one parish in the church of the Franciscans, now called Christ-church. Within the walls were placed several slabs with the inscription, 'This is Christ's Church, founded by King Henrie the eight.'¹ 'A very odd foundation to let two churches out of four stand, subverting the other two and a good hospital, and to call himself a founder.'²

The Grey Friars' house at Oxford also was seized, and the buildings and a pleasant grove of about five acres were let to William Freer and John Pye, Aldermen of Oxford, for twenty shillings per annum. The cloister or place of burial, with a plot of ground

¹ Speed, p. 783.

² Stevens, ap. Dugdale, vol. vi. p. 1515.

enclosed therein, was let to Richard Gunter, Alderman of Oxford, for three shillings and sixpence yearly rent. The orchard or garden called Paradise, with another garden called Boteham or Bateham, was let to William Thomas, alias Plomer, of Oxford, for six shillings and eightpence per annum. These rents continued to be paid yearly to the king till the year 1545, when his majesty sold the premises to Richard Andrews and John Howes, from whom the above-named Richard Gunter and his wife Joan bought them all not long after. Then the trees were cut down, the grass-plats were trodden out of all form, the church was entirely demolished, and the stones and statues, and the very monuments of the dead, were thrown down, taken away, and disposed of for any use that could make the sale of them bring in a penny.¹

The strictness with which the Friars Minor had adhered to their rule of poverty is proved by the insignificant value of their property in London and Oxford, which were their two principal establishments. A further proof is afforded by the reports and inventories of the Royal Commissioners, to whom their other houses were made over. The revenues of the friary at Bedford were estimated at 3*l.* 15*s.* 2*d.* a year. Of the friars at Aylesbury Dr. John London wrote to Cromwell, 'I found them very poor and in debt, their ornaments very coarse, and very little stuff of household; there I only sold the glass windows and their ornaments, with their utensils. I left the house whole, and only defaced the church there. The whole church is well covered with lead and a good new roof.' The revenues were valued at 3*l.* 2*s.* 5*d.*² The friary at Walsingham was valued at 3*l.* Northampton was comparatively rich with property valued at 6*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* per annum.³ At

¹ Wood, *Antiq. Oxon.* vol. i. p. 80.

² Dugdale, vol. vi. p. 1509.

³ *Ibid.* p. 1523.

Coventry the friars had neither lands nor buildings, nor other possessions spiritual or temporal, but only a permission to receive the charity of good people.¹ At Bridgnorth, in giving up their house they said, 'That they were not able to live; for the charity of the people was so small that in three years they had not received in alms in ready money the sum of ten shillings a year, and they lived only by a service that they had in the town in a chapel on the bridge.'² Their property was valued at 4*l.* per annum.³ In Shrewsbury their house was declared to be the poorest in the town; for they had only three or four acres of arable land and little personal property, no jewels, nothing but a plated crucifix and a mean chalice.⁴ Poor indeed must have been their condition if they were poorer than the Austin Friars in the same town, of whom Richard, Bishop of Dover, wrote, 'All utensils gone, and nothing there to help the friars, not so much as a chalice to say Mass; and no man durst trust the friars to lend them any, so that all that was in the house could not be praised at twenty-six shillings and eightpence,—no bedding, nor meat, bread, nor drink.'⁵

As early as 1541 Henry's troubled conscience had driven him to send Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, to Germany, to negotiate through the emperor's mediation a reconciliation with the Pope. But the humiliation of a public confession of sins committed in the sight of all Christendom, and the restitution of the Church property, which would obviously have been necessary, were more than he could brook.⁶ Again, on the approach of death the

¹ Dugdale, vol. vi. p. 1534.

² Chapter House Books, No. 309, p. 65, ap. Brewer, pref. p. 20.

³ Dugdale, vol. vi. p. 1531.

⁴ Ibid. p. 1531.

⁵ Chapter House Books, No. 309, p. 83, ap. Brewer, pref. p. 21.

⁶ Sander, part i. p. 98.

stings of conscience led him to consult his ministers on the same subject. But the crowd of worldly parasites who surrounded him, fearing his anger if they spoke the truth, and trembling for the loss of the lands which they sacrilegiously held, lulled his remorse. Gardiner alone ventured to suggest that he should lay the question before Parliament, or, should he not have time for this, that he should at least write down what were his wishes, since God accepts the vow of the heart when some unavoidable impediment renders its execution impossible.¹ But even this was not done.

On the 28th January 1547 Henry died and went to his account. 'Even as his life' had been 'sinful, so after his death God showed a strange ensample upon his wretched carcass. For at such time as he was preparing to be ceared and spiced by the surgeons in the chamber at Westminster, where he died, to be after removed down to the chapel, and so from thence to Windsor, where it was buried, it chanced his carcass by mishap and over-boisterous lifting to [fall] to the ground, out of which issued such a quantity of horrible and filthy blood and matter, that it was no small trouble to a number about it to close the place again, and to make it ready against the next day for the remove. But before all could be done there came into the place (as I have been credibly informed) a great black dog, no man could tell from whence, which dog (whilst everybody was occupied) filled himself so full as his side could hold, with licking up this filthy blood that was spilt, and in the end escaped without hurt from the guard and divers others that stroke at him with their halberts and other weapons, meaning verily to have killed him, if they could.'²

¹ Sander, p. 102.

² Hall's Life of Bishop Fisher, Brit. Museum, ms. Harl. 7049.

Again, when his body was being 'carried from London to Windsor, there to be interred, it rested the first night at the monastery of Sion, which the king had suppressed; at which time, were it with the jogging and shaking of the chariot, or for any other secret cause, the coffin of lead, wherein his dead corpse was put, being riven and cloven, all the pavement of the church was, with the fat and the corrupt putrefied blood dropped out of the said corpse, foully embrued. Early in the morning those that had the charge of the dressing, coffining, and embalming of the body, with the plumbers, repaired thither to reform that mishap; and lo, suddenly was there found among their legs a dog, lapping and licking up the king's blood, as it chanced to King Achab, before specified. This chance one William Consell reported, saying he was there present, and with much ado drove away the said dog.¹

Thus F. Peto's prophecy, that dogs would lick up his blood, was literally fulfilled.

Henry was succeeded by his son Edward, after whom came in succession Mary and Elizabeth; and all three dying childless, the royal line which, according to Dr. Curwin, was to have been established for ever by adultery, became extinct. Thus, by the succession of Mary in her own right before Elizabeth, and by the extinction of Henry's descendants, the words of the Holy Maid of Kent and of F. Peto proved true.

¹ A Treatise of Marrying, by the Rev. Nicholas Harpsfield, LL.D., the last Catholic Archdeacon of Canterbury; ap. The Academy, June 24, 1876.

CHAPTER VII.

RESTORATION OF THE ORDER.

THE death of Henry and the youth of his successor, Edward, gave the leading English nobility and gentry a fine opportunity for freeing themselves and their country from the guilt and misery of schism. But the curse of the abbey lands and the Church's treasures lay heavy upon them, smothering conscience and manly spirit, and crushing them down into base servility to any upstart who had a spark of adventurous daring. Hitherto the guilt of the schism had rested in great part on Henry alone, but now they deliberately confirmed his acts, and thus took the sin upon themselves. Then, in the natural course of things heresy was added to schism, and scandalous immorality, crying oppression of the poor, and lawless tyranny followed in their train.

But the nation remained Catholic. So strong was the link that bound it to the Church that violent measures had to be resorted to to wrench it away from her. Bishops Gardiner, Heath, Bonner, Tonstall, and Day, who upheld the Catholic faith, were committed to the Tower. Zealous priests were hanged on their own church-steeple. Catholic preaching was silenced. Foreign Protestant teachers were brought over to rob the poor and simple people of their faith. And when whole counties rose in arms, each man with his rosary in his hand, and demanded the Latin Mass as of old, foreign Protestant troops were called in to trample down the national movement, and by wholesale massacres, from which even Protestants recoil with horror, to force the new religion on the helpless nation.¹

A generation had well-nigh passed away since the

¹ Hallam, *Constit. Hist.* chap. ii. p. 92.

Grey Friars' schools in Oxford and Cambridge had been closed ; but their spirit still lingered in the old Catholic halls and colleges, where the faith was openly defended. Public disputations were therefore forbidden. Ignorant fanatics were turned loose in the libraries. In their rage against religion and learning, which they rightly identified with what they scornfully called Popery—and especially with the Grey Friars—they made irreparable havoc among the books, records, and MSS. In Oxford, after tearing off the costly binding enriched with gold, silver, and gems—which alone they were capable of prizing—they bore books and MSS. of priceless value on biers through the town with mock funereal pomp, singing ribald dirges and doleful ditties ; and finally, heaping them up in a huge pile in the market-place, they set them on fire and burnt them to ashes. This disgraceful proceeding they called 'the funeral of Scotus and the Scotists.' Thus they unintentionally proclaimed the glory and preëminence in the schools of Duns Scotus and his followers.¹

The whole kingdom was in a state of misery and disorder. The suppression of the religious houses had deprived the poor, not only of the charitable help of the monks, but also of good landlords. The new landlords thought only of themselves and of gaining money. They threw the labourers out of work by turning the lands into pastures ; they pulled down hamlets to make room for sheep and cattle ; they enclosed the commons, on which the poor depended in great measure for subsistence. Moreover, the insatiable covetousness of the late king and of the young king's ministers led them to cheat the whole nation by mixing copper with the silver coin, thereby

¹ Hist. Min. Prov. Angliæ, p. 52, ap. Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 248 ; Wood, Antiq. Oxon. vol. ii. an. 1550, p. 108, ed. Gutch, 1796.

raising the price of all the necessaries of life. Year by year the wretchedness of the people increased. At last, driven to despair, they rose in county after county, broke down the enclosures, and called on the government for justice and relief. But the only answer to their cry of agony was the sending of soldiers, who pitilessly slaughtered them by thousands.

Happily this cruel tyranny did not last very long. On 6th July 1553, to the great joy of the nation, Mary, the daughter of Katherine, succeeded to the throne, as the Maid of Kent had foretold. On her accession she declared that though her own conscience was settled in the religion that she had professed from her infancy, yet she did not intend to compel any of her subjects to receive it till the opinion of the nation was taken in Parliament.¹ She kept to her word. In December the Catholic religion was publicly restored by the Parliament; and in the following year, when Cardinal Pole came to England as the Pope's legate, the Parliament, kneeling before him, begged for absolution and reunion to the Church.

The queen's first care was to relieve the misery of her subjects. At her own expense she replaced the base coin in circulation by real silver. She made a present to the nation of the taxes which were due when her brother died, and nearly three years passed before she asked them for any money.² She would not touch a penny of what had fallen to the crown through sacrilege; and during her short reign of five years she thus gave up about a million and a half of money. Great part of this went to the poor; and consequently, though bad harvests raised corn to famine price, there were none of the popular risings which had lately cost many thousands of lives. She got the Parliament to repeal the late cruel laws, which

¹ Burnet, *Hist. Reform.* vol. ii. part ii. book ii. p. 394.

² *Ibid.* pp. 405, 517.

punished as treason what was not really such. She ordered the judges to do justice between herself and her subjects without respect to persons;¹ and consequently, for the first time since the accession of her grandfather, Henry VII., a jury dared, at the trial of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, to acquit a prisoner arraigned by the crown. So scrupulous was she to act strictly according to law, that when her sister Elizabeth and Edward Courtenay, whom she had just released from an imprisonment of twenty years and restored to his rank as Earl of Devon, were found to be implicated in Wyatt's rebellion, she would not proceed to extremities against them, because they could only be proved to have consented to treason, whereas the law of England condemned to death those alone who had committed open acts of treason.²

The point in which Mary's character appears the brightest was her reluctance to shed blood. On her accession she released, contrary to the advice of her ministers, all the State prisoners, both Protestant and Catholic. After the failure of the rebellion to put Lady Jane Grey on the throne, she was with difficulty persuaded to allow even three of the rebels to be put to death.³ In six months those whom she had pardoned were again in arms; but even then she reluctantly consented to Lady Jane's execution, and would not let more than fifty-eight others be executed.⁴ All the persons of lower position she pardoned by hundreds. Her clemency is the more remarkable when we compare it to the bloodthirstiness of her father, her brother's ministers, and her sister. After the Pilgrimage of Grace Henry ordered the Duke of Norfolk to

¹ Holinshed, l. iv. vol. ii. p. 1747, ap. Strickland, Queens, vol. v. p. 365.

² Letter from Renaud to the Emperor, State Paper Office, ap. Tytler, Edward VI. and Mary, vol. ii. p. 320.

³ Burnet, p. 391.

⁴ Ibid. p. 437.

'cause such dreadful execution to be done upon a good number of the inhabitants of every town, village, and hamlet that have offended, as they may be a fearful spectacle to all others hereafter.'¹ Seventy-four persons were accordingly hanged at Carlisle, and proportionate numbers all over the North. In Edward's reign four thousand rebels were killed or executed by Lord Russell at Exeter, besides many others hanged by Lord Gray;² and five thousand were killed at Norwich.³ Again, under Elizabeth, after the northern rebellion sixty persons were hanged at Carlisle, and numbers of others in every market-town and other place over a space sixty miles long and forty broad between Newcastle and Wetherby.⁴

Mary lost no time in restoring the Observants, who had suffered so much for her and her mother. She brought them back to their old house at Greenwich, which she rebuilt two years later. She also built a house for them in London, and she gave them another at Southampton. She caused the attainder of FF. Elstow and Peto to be reversed. F. Elstow became Guardian of the Convent of Greenwich, and F. Peto was appointed the queen's confessor. As John Capon, alias Salcot, whom Henry had made Bishop of Salisbury, was willing to make his submission to the Church, Peto gladly resigned the see to him and returned to his poor cell at Greenwich.

Round them gathered the few surviving brethren whom the rope, the fagot, and starvation had spared. Among them were John Richel and John Gray, who had escaped to the Low Countries, where they had met with a kind reception. There came also John Standish, nephew to the late Bishop of S. Asaph, who, having been forced into exile before he had

¹ State Papers, vol. i. p. 537, ap. Froude, Hist. Eng. vol. iii. chap. xiv.

² Stow, p. 596.

³ Ibid. p. 597.

⁴ Ibid. p. 664.

finished his studies, had taken his doctor's degree in Paris, and now took it at Oxford. The unexpected reunion of the brethren was very touching, joyous thoughts of their white-robed martyr-brothers mingling with regret and humiliation that they themselves should not have been found worthy to share their heroic victory.

Novices soon flocked to them. The most distinguished was Richard Britan, a man of wonderful mortification, and no less courage and zeal. He lived on bread alone, and ate but a very small quantity even of it. He had already won the confessor's crown. In Henry's reign he had, at the risk of his life, publicly defended the Pope's supremacy in the Oxford schools, and had consequently suffered a long imprisonment. Another novice was John Dennis, a member of a good Devonshire family. In 1545 he had been standard-bearer to Henry VIII. at the siege of Boulogne; but now, for the love of God he devoted himself to a penitential life. A third novice was Thomas Bouchier, who belonged to the family of the Earls of Bath and the Bouchier-Wreys of Devonshire. He afterwards wrote the *Historia Ecclesiastica de Martyrio Fratrum Ordinis Minorum Divi Francisci*, which gives an account of the martyrs of his Order between 1536 and 1582. After the queen's marriage, several Spanish friars who had come over in Philip's suite also joined them.

They found ample scope for their zeal; for, though the mass of the nation had not lost its faith, yet many had conformed to the State Church, and had to be convinced of their sin. Others had been puzzled and bewildered by false and ridiculous interpretations of Scripture, unworthy of the holy mysteries of religion, which had been set forth by tailors, weavers, cobblers, mechanics, and all sorts of ignorant persons; and these had to be instructed anew in the faith from

which they had only unintentionally departed. F. John Standish particularly exerted himself in checking this abuse of Holy Scripture by bringing it before Parliament, and by writing a book called *Of not Publishing the Bible in Vulgar Languages*. Obstinate heretics, too, had to be converted; and accordingly we meet with the Spanish friars Alfonso de Castro and Juan de Villa Gracia,¹ in Cranmer's prison in Oxford, arguing with him and inducing him to sign the recantation which at the stake he so unhappily withdrew.

As time wore on and the hopes of a Catholic heir died out, a dark cloud gathered and hung over the Church and the nation. The uncertainty as to the future was a further stimulus to the zeal of the friars. Though it could scarcely have entered into their thoughts that the five short years of Mary's reign were but a brief hour of grace before well-nigh three centuries of blood and persecution, yet Elizabeth's doubtful attitude, and the character of the friends whom she chose, must have awakened their fears. As they went hither and thither through the length and breadth of the land, mixing familiarly with all classes, they revived the drooping, nerved the weak, imparted heroic devotion to the strong, and prepared all to meet the coming woe.

As if to remind them that the cross still lay in their path, it happened one day that as F. Elstow and F. Peto were going from London to Greenwich, a Protestant mob attacked them. A stone broke one of F. Peto's ribs, and they saved their lives only by jumping into a boat.

During the last three years of Mary's reign many

¹ Wood calls the latter a Dominican (*Fasti Oxon.* part i. p. 155, ed. Bliss, 1815). But Collier says that he was a Franciscan.

Protestants were put to death. Every one now disapproves of persecution for religion. But it would be unjust to apply the opinions of the nineteenth century to actions in the sixteenth, when both Catholics and Protestants thought it was a religious duty. The English Catholic clergy, however, were opposed to it, and they may claim the glory of having taken the lead in teaching the religious toleration which is now well-nigh universal. Cardinal Pole, the Pope's Legate, reminded the Bishops that they were 'fathers who ought to look on those that erred as their sick children, and not for that to kill them;'¹ and he exhorted them to 'treat the people and their flock with all gentleness, and to endeavour themselves to win the people by gentleness rather than by severity and rigour.'²

This persecution was a great distress to the Observants. It was directly opposed to the traditions of their Order. Nearly three centuries before their great doctor, Roger Bacon, had written: 'By the excellence of wisdom, they who are obstinate in malice can alone be repressed, and they are better repelled from the borders of the Church, and further, than by the effusion of Christian blood.'³ His brethren still held to his doctrine, and, knowing the power of apostolic preaching, they were opposed to forcing the faith on unwilling hearts by persecution. In 1555 Br. Alfonso de Castro, who was Philip's confessor, spoke strongly in a sermon preached before him against taking away people's lives for religion; and after using some satirical expressions against the Bishops for adopting such severities, he said, 'that Scripture prescribed to them quite different methods, teaching

¹ Burnet, p. 479.

² Fox, vol. vi. p. 587, ed. Seeley, ap. Maitland, *Essays on the Reformation*, Essay xx. p. 437.

³ *Opus Majus*, part i. chap. i. ap. Brewer, pref. p. 51.

them to instruct those in meekness that opposed them, and not to hale them to execution, and burn them because they could believe no better.¹

But the Bishops, openly in court, cleared themselves from this charge,² as they were fairly entitled to do, since the council had formerly accused them of negligence, and of refusing to proceed against the persons brought before them.³

How little part they took in it is plainly shown by the fact, that in nine dioceses out of fourteen, one of which was Gardiner's, there was not a single execution. London, from its intercourse with the Continent, was always the head-quarters of heresy, and consequently a large proportion of the prisoners came before Bonner. But he never searched for heretics, or was the cause of any one being put in prison. He dealt only with those cases which were brought before him as a bishop and a judge;⁴ and with these he was, of course, bound to deal as the law directed. But the great pains that he took to convince the prisoners of the religious errors which lay at the root of their political violence, and the eagerness with which he caught at any word which might enable him to discharge them, are really very touching.⁵ On one occasion he liberated two-and-twenty 'obstinate heretics,' contriving with Cardinal Pole's coöperation that they should sign a paper carefully worded to meet their ignorance, and thus make a show of submission without wounding their conscience.⁶

Nor does the blame of the persecution justly attach to Mary, because in every case on record that was brought directly before her, she liberated the accused. One of her most faithful followers was Ed-

¹ Collier, vol. vi. part ii. book v. p. 113.

² Burnet, p. 489.

³ Maitland, Essay xx. p. 487-8.

⁴ Ibid. p. 413.

⁵ Ibid. p. 423, and the whole essay.

⁶ Burnet, p. 557.

ward Underhill, who, for his zeal against 'Papists,' was called the 'Hot Gospeller,' but whom she had thus released from Newgate.¹ Moreover, shortly after Philip went abroad in 1555, she was obliged by illness to give up attending the council and taking any part in the government, so that her signature was not attached to the executions which have thrown so much obloquy on her name.² It would have been well 'had as little cruelty been done under her as by her.'³

The persons really answerable for the persecution seem to have been a few members of the council⁴—hard worldly men, who had little or no religion, and were ready to change their faith whenever it was their interest to do so. It ought not, however, to be forgotten that heretics like those they had to deal with were burned in the reigns of Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth, and that the total number whom they put to death has been calculated at only from two hundred and twenty to two hundred and seventy.

The executions in this reign were, however, far more for political causes than for religion. Cranmer, Ridley, and the other Protestant Bishops had openly taken part in rebellions against Mary. Protestant teachers who had fled abroad inundated England with writings of an incendiary character, calling on her subjects to dethrone and kill her, denouncing their not doing so as a preference of man to God, and ascribing bad seasons, storms, the high price of corn, &c., to God's vengeance for their neglect of this duty.⁵ So outrageous were the principles thus spread abroad, that even Elizabeth's Protestant Archbishop, Dr. Parker, said that these books, written 'by ministers of good estimation,' 'horrified him when he read

¹ Strickland, vol. v. p. 290. ² Burnet, vol. iii. l. 5. p. 440.

³ Fuller, Ch. Hist. vol. ii. book viii. p. 431, ed. Tegg, 1837.

⁴ Burnet, vol. iii. pp. 31, 441, 452.

⁵ Maitland, Essays v.-ix.

them.¹ Such seditious writings naturally led ignorant people to commit acts of violence. A priest was fired at in the pulpit; a dagger was thrown at another; a third was attacked and wounded while saying Mass. The queen's life was aimed at. Her death was publicly prayed for. In all these cases the culprits defended themselves on religious grounds, and were extolled by Protestants of high position as martyrs for the faith. It was obviously necessary to punish such political crimes. But unfortunately they were proceeded against as heresy, from which, no doubt, they sprang.

In 1557 the Pope withdrew Cardinal Pole's legatine powers, because, Philip being in arms against him, he did not think it fitting that a legate of his should be within the king's dominions.² But the queen and the bishops represented to his Holiness that all England was moved, and that it was necessary for the safety of the realm that Pole should continue to be legate. Whereupon the Pope, being desirous to avert the imminent peril to a country not yet fully brought back to the faith, and to satisfy the queen and the nation without compromising his own dignity, created F. Peto a cardinal, and appointed him his legate.³ The queen was so annoyed at this opposition to her wishes that she forbade Cardinal Peto to enter England. He had accepted the legatine office only in obedience to the Pope, and he gladly remained in France; for, having a great affection for Cardinal Pole, he had no wish to supplant him.⁴ In the following April he died in France, in consequence of the interior injuries which he had

¹ Strype, *Life of Parker*, ap. Maitland, p. 101.

² Burnet, vol. ii. p. 565.

³ *The Episcopal Succession*, by W. M. Brady, vol. i. p. 5, vol. ii. p. 323.

⁴ Wood, *Athen. Oxon.* vol. i. p. 292.

sustained through the breaking of his ribs by a Protestant mob,¹ as already told. Thus at last, by a strange coincidence, he unexpectedly closed his life as an exile for the Pope's authority and a martyr for the faith. After his death Cardinal Pole was reappointed legate, and held the office till his death, which took place a few hours after that of his royal mistress.²

CHAPTER VIII.

PERSECUTION UNDER ELIZABETH.

As soon as Elizabeth was seated on the throne she broke up the community at Greenwich, and banished the Grey Friars from the kingdom. About the same time their houses in Scotland were gutted and pulled down by Protestant mobs, and the friars were dispersed. Several of them remained hidden in England, but most of them went abroad and were hospitably received by the King of Spain and their brethren. Among the latter were FF. Elstow, Bouchier, Fox, Richel, and Gray.

F. Bouchier, after spending some years in France and taking his doctor's degree at the Sorbonne, went on to Rome, where he lived in the Franciscan Convent of the Ara Cœli. After a time he was appointed Penitentiary of the Church of S. John Lateran, and died in that office in 1586.

F. Stephen Fox, who had been custos at Greenwich, took refuge in the Convent of S. Francis at Antwerp, where he remained till the city was plundered by roving bands of Protestants. He then

¹ Francis à Sancta Clara Davenport, *Hist. Min.* p. 54, ap. *Collect. Angl.-Minor.* part i. p. 254.

² Wood, *Athen. Oxon.* vol. i. p. 292.

went with about twenty English Poor Clares first to Rouen and afterwards to Lisbon, where Philip II., to whom Portugal then belonged, gave the nuns a convent. In their church F. Fox died and was buried in 1588.

F. Richel passed his last days in the Franciscan Convent at Louvain, where he was held in great esteem for his holy life. He died in 1599, when he was ninety-seven years of age, seventy-two of which he had spent in religion, and nearly as many in the priesthood.

F. John Gray attained in Flanders to the honour of martyrdom which had been denied him in his native land. On leaving England he returned to the convent of his Order at Brussels, where he was looked on as a saint. The Protestants had taken possession of the city during the absence of Don John of Austria, and as on his return he was recovering all the other towns which they had seized, they expected a similar reverse of fortune to befall them in Brussels, and consequently, their hatred of the Catholics increased from day to day. The Observant Friars were the special objects of their odium; and not content with spreading gross calumnies against them, they insulted them publicly and stirred up the scum of the population to put a stop by violence to their celebration of Catholic worship. At length, on the 5th June, 1579, a furious mob was gathered together and led against the friary. The porter, Br. James, happened to be an Englishman. As soon as he caught sight of the mob he had the presence of mind to shut and barricade the doors, so that they long resisted all attempts to break through them. He then ran to the cells of the brethren and warned them of the imminent danger. Hastily collecting the altar plate and the few other articles of value which they possessed, they prepared to fly by a door at the back of

the house before the mob should have time to surround it, and to carry with them F. Gray, who was very infirm. He was now seventy years of age, and was very reluctant to quit the holy house in which he had long dwelt under the same roof with his Lord. In his youth he had given up the large fortune and high position to which he was born, in order to embrace evangelical poverty. A few years later he had refused a canonry, preferring the lowly state of a son of S. Francis to the highest honours that the world could give. Nearly fifty years had passed since he had first been driven from his home in Greenwich, and during all that time the crown of martyrdom had been the object of his ceaseless aspirations. How, then, could he fly now that it was unexpectedly brought within his reach? He refused to go with his brethren. He pointed out to them the great risks that they ran in their flight, and exhorted them to remain with him instead of rushing upon the death which probably awaited them in the street. 'Let us stay in God's house,' he said. 'Where can we die so happily as in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, on the holy spot where we hope to be buried?' But all in vain. They would scarcely listen to him, and as time pressed, they hurried away. The English friar, Br. James, who also had long cherished the hope of martyrdom, alone stayed behind with F. Gray.

The mob at last succeeded in breaking into the friary, and, finding it empty, they rushed to the church, where they beheld the two English friars on their knees before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament. They first attacked Br. James and beat him till he lost consciousness and they thought he was dead. They then fell upon F. Gray, beating him, and heaping on him the vilest abuse. He, not knowing what else to do, humbly begged their pardon and besought

them not to be so cruel to a poor old man. But the ruffians cried out, 'What! shall we pardon thee, thou wretch of a friar!' One of them then drew his sword and struck him a mortal blow on the head; whereupon he said sweetly, 'I forgive you the wounds that you inflict on me,' and expired.

When the news of what had happened was known in the city, crowds assembled, weeping and lamenting the death of such a saint; and as in the case of the martyrs of old, there was a pious contest to get hold of anything that had been sprinkled with his blood. There happened then to be in the town a man who was dying of an incurable disease. On hearing of the death of F. Gray he begged to have something dipped in the blood of the martyr brought to him. When he beheld it he knelt down and kissed it with the greatest possible reverence; and scarcely had he done so, when lo, he was snatched from the brink of the grave and perfectly cured. The news of this miracle spread the fame of F. Gray's sanctity far and near.¹

On Elizabeth's accession Catholics in England were in a very different position from that which they had held in the reigns of Henry and Edward. They had now learnt from bitter experience that schism and heresy are inseparable, and it was no longer possible for them to delude themselves, as they had formerly done, with the hope of maintaining the Catholic faith while they relinquished their hold on the Rock, against which alone the gates of hell will never prevail. Mary's reign had been a brief breathing pause in the heat of a mortal combat; but it had sufficed to open their eyes to the deadly nature of the struggle and to the cowardice with which they had hitherto met it. In the reign of Henry, and even in great measure in that of Edward, they had

¹ Danielle, p. 98.

obeyed the king rather than God. But now a very considerable portion of the nation, which was almost entirely Catholic, atoned for its former weakness and worldliness and made a noble stand for the Church and liberty of conscience.

All the Bishops, except one, refused to take the oath of supremacy or conform to the new religion, and were imprisoned. All the religious communities of both men and women were true to the faith. So also were almost all the heads of houses, professors, and fellows of Oxford and Cambridge, three hundred of the most learned of whom went to foreign universities, especially those in Belgium.¹ Great numbers of the dignitaries in the cathedrals, colleges, public schools, and other ecclesiastical institutions gave up their benefices.² So many of the lower clergy followed their example that, in order to keep up the appearance of religious worship, the government found it necessary to ordain tradesmen and other illiterate persons to read prayers and homilies to the people.³ But even this poor expedient failed to fill up the vacancies, and in many towns there was neither Common Prayer nor administration of the Protestant Sacraments.⁴ From the same cause arose a great want of schools and schoolmasters and the almost total extinction of learning in the universities, of which the government frequently complained.⁵ Besides the sufferers for the faith, many Catholic priests lived quietly as chaplains in the houses of noblemen, or through the interest of friends held sinecures and were never called on to take the oath.

¹ Sander, p. 158 ; Dodd, *Eccles. Hist.* vol. ii. l. iv. art. ii. appendix 44, ed. Tierney ; Strype, *Annals*, vol. i. chap. xxiv. p. 274, 2d ed. 1725.

² Sander, p. 160 ; Dodd as above.

³ Strype, *Annals*, vol. i. chap. xii. p. 158, chap. xiii. p. 178, chap. xxx. p. 346.

⁴ *Ibid.* chap. xxxi. p. 351.

⁵ *Ibid.* chap. xxxi. p. 360.

The laity in no way fell behind their pastors. The country nobility and gentry, the lawyers and the agricultural population, held to the old faith.¹ The whole of Wales, all the northern and western, and many of the eastern, counties were notoriously Catholic. Year after year the government was obliged to have recourse to penal laws and increasingly severe penalties, in order to force the people to go to the Protestant Church and receive the Protestant Sacraments. In fact the new religion was confined to the court, to London and the places in its neighbourhood, and the seaport towns, which were corrupted by the spirit of commerce and worldliness, and by intercourse with foreign Protestants. There were, unhappily, many Catholics who, while they openly professed the Catholic faith and secretly said or heard Mass whenever they could, yet from timidity or worldly motives took the oath of supremacy and went to the Protestant church.² So notorious was their conduct, that even after the queen had reigned ten years it was a matter of complaint that Popish priests still enjoyed the best livings without recantation or penance,³ giving themselves out as such, and persuading the people privately not to receive the new doctrine.⁴

Under these circumstances, missionary work among the Catholics, which had been quite uncalled for and

¹ Sander, pp. 159, 160; Strype, an. 1569, vol. i. chap. lv. pp. 600-607.

² Strype, vol. i. chap. xiii. p. 178, chap. lv. p. 599.

³ Ibid. vol. i. chap. lv. p. 602.

⁴ Ibid. vol. i. chap. xiii. p. 178, chap. lv. p. 342, vol. ii. chap. xi. p. 98. Isolated quotations from Strype give an inadequate idea of the weight of his evidence in support of all our above statements. His Annals are, in fact, a record of the overwhelming preponderance of Catholics in the realm, of the consequent anxiety and alarm of Elizabeth and her ministers, and of their unremitting attempts to crush them and rob the people of their faith.

even impossible in Henry's reign, was greatly needed. The Franciscan Friars who remained in England were so numerous and active that even in the first year of Elizabeth's reign the government was greatly irritated against them, and attributed to their zeal the want of unity among Protestants. F. Tonstall, cousin-german to the Bishop of Durham, was particularly obnoxious to them.¹ There was also F. Gregory Basset—a 'common Mass-sayer' as they called him—who was supposed to be hidden in Herefordshire, and for whom they were always on the watch, but apparently without success.²

There was also F. John ———, commonly known by the name of the 'Old Beggar,' who had zealously opposed Henry and had suffered for the faith.³ In Elizabeth's reign he lived in the house of one Roger Lockwood upon Terpim Green, in the parish of Layland in Lancashire. He was so noted for his great virtues and penitential life that the Earl of Derby prevailed upon Queen Elizabeth to give him leave, even when the penal laws were in full force, to wear his habit in public. He had the gift of miracles; and when he was at last confined to his bed by old age and the infirmities brought on by the austerities of many years, the people flocked to him from all parts of the north of England, bringing with them their children and friends, and even their flocks and herds, to be cured. The Benedictines claim him because on his gravestone he is called a priest and a monk. But Grey Friars are often called monks; and the woman who nursed him in his sickness and was living in 1649, when Br. Angelus Mason wrote, bore witness that he never received or touched any money, and that he told her he was a mendicant and a beggar, as he

¹ Strype, an. 1560, chap. xix. p. 228.

² Ibid. an. 1561, chap. xxiv. p. 278.

³ Dodd, part iv. l. ii. p. 142, ed. 1739.

was commonly called. Moreover, William Walton, one of his penitents, declared that he went barefoot and wore a gray habit and a cord of S. Francis for his girdle. He died about 1590, and was buried in the churchyard at Layland, at the south end of the church, before the chancel-door.¹

F. Nelson, who had entered the Order in Queen Mary's reign, carried on the apostolic life in England during the entire reigns of Elizabeth and James I., and at last died, in 1628, in the house of a Catholic gentleman about two miles from Hereford, where he had chiefly lived for thirty years.²

F. Richard — also remained in England, where he suffered great hardships and a long imprisonment. At length being driven out of the kingdom, he went into Spain, where he was kindly received by his brethren of the province of Andalusia. So great was his reputation for sanctity that the inhabitants of Herez de la Frontera, where he died in 1619, cut off, as relics, pieces of the habit in which he was about to be buried.³

F. — Collier also was remarkable for his apostolic zeal. He was taken up in 1590 for being a priest, and died in prison through the hardships that he suffered, thus attaining to the crown of martyrdom.⁴

There was also F. William Stanny, Provincial and Commissary-General of England, who was greatly revered for his piety and devotion. He was the instrument, as we shall hereafter relate, of re-founding the Province in the reign of James I.⁵

All through the reign of Elizabeth the Franciscans held their ground in England under such adverse circumstances that nothing less than a supernatural

¹ Certamen Seraphicum, p. 13.

² Ibid. p. 14.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. p. 13.

⁵ Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 292.

power could have upheld them. When the Order was banished by Elizabeth and the brethren were dispersed, the English Province, canonically speaking, ceased to exist. Henceforth the friars had neither convent, nor church, nor school. The regular election of Provincials and other ministers was impossible. The most essential and ordinary forms of religious life and discipline could not be kept up; the rule could not be observed; and even the gray habit had to be thrown aside. But still the Province was kept alive, though in an irregular way, through the Divine life which animated it. Supernatural love supplied the place of regular forms, of discipline, and of strict observance. The seal of the Order, handed on from one martyr or confessor to another, maintained a succession of Provincials and secured the obedience of devoted hearts. Prisons were their convents, and dungeons and hiding-holes their cells. Homeless wanderers—hungry, athirst, and footsore, death ever staring them in the face, dodging their footsteps, or pressing on their track—they found fitting nourishment for the spirit of poverty and the Cross, and ample scope for following Jesus crucified. Even in the most adverse times novices were drawn to them by the perfume of their sanctity, and gave up wealth, high position, and the fairest worldly prospects to join them. These novices, after being privately professed, were sent abroad for their studies, on completing which they came back to labour in England. Some of the English exiles, too, were professed in foreign convents of the Order and afterwards joined the English mission.¹ The records of the mission at this period are very scanty; for the government had so many spies, who were always on the alert to pick up or manufacture evidence against Catholics, that the latter wrote as little as was possible. Occasional references in the

¹ Collect. Angl.-Minor. part i. p. 291.

writings of both Catholics and Protestants prove, however, that the Franciscans were at this time among those who were labouring zealously in their native land. But unhappily all details of their lives, their fields of labour, and the circumstances of their death or martyrdom, are lost to us. Of F. John Buckley alone have we any detailed history.

F. John or Griffith Jones, alias Robert or Herbert Buckley—in religion Godfrey Maurice¹—was born in the parish of Clenock in Carnarvonshire. He belonged to a good Welsh family, which, like most of those in the Principality, had remained faithful to the Catholic Church. He was one of the young men who, stirred by the sudden relapse of the government into Protestantism on Elizabeth's accession, had cast off all worldly considerations, and, devoting themselves to God's service, had gone abroad with Dr. Allen in the first year of her reign.

It was not till several years later that measures were adopted to keep up the regular supply of missionaries in England. We therefore do not know where F. Buckley received Holy Orders, nor the date of his return to England. But as he was a friend of Dr. Allen's, and yet his name does not appear on the books of the English College, which was founded in 1568, there can be little doubt that he was then

¹ He may be identified with Robertus Jones in the Catalogue of Nicholas Sander in 1572, and that of Bridgewater in 1588. Some have supposed that he was either 'an old priest' or one of the first seminarists. The facts in the text are taken from his indictment which was founded on his own statement, and are recorded in a MS. belonging to the English Carthusians at Nieuport, now in the library of the University at Louvain, which seems to be a description of his trial and execution, by an eye-witness, similar to those often sent round to the English convents on the Continent. We are indebted for them to the *Rambler*, new series, vol. xi.

already at work. Probably his absence from England was so short as not to have been generally known; for he was commonly supposed to have been an 'old priest'—that is to say, one who had been ordained in Mary's time or earlier and had always remained in England.

For more than twenty years we lose sight of him. During this time his life may be truly said to be hid in God. Being a secular priest, without any Bishop or other superior to guide or help him, he stood quite alone, ever moving from place to place, uncertain whom to trust or who was a secret foe, constantly changing his disguise and even his name—now known as John, and again as Griffith, Jones; then as Robert or Herbert Buckley, and later still as Godfrey Maurice. Thus the details of his life would have been imperfectly known even to the English Catholics of his own day. Great, indeed, must have been the supernatural strength and the love of souls, which alone could have upheld him in this solitary life of constant trial. At length we get a glimpse of him in the Marshalsea in London, among the prisoners confined there before June 1582. The prisons were at this time a fruitful field of labour. There were to be found in them numbers of so-called Protestants, who, if not themselves apostates from the faith, were at least the children of Catholics; and in their present circumstances they could be more easily recalled to the Church. There were also crowds of Catholics of all ranks and classes, separated from their families, perhaps racked and tortured, or at all events scarcely suffering less from the filth and foul air of their dungeons; deprived, if they were rich, of what were to them necessary comforts, which even exorbitant bribes could not always purchase; or if they were poor, dependent on alms, and in their default subject to excessive ill-treatment by their mercenary jailers. Among these, whether in

consoling the strong, or upholding the weak, or raising the fallen, a priest found ample work. F. Buckley remained in the Marshalsea for about three years, from 1583 to 1585 or 1586, when he seems to have regained his liberty, through what circumstances we do not know. But being of a good family, probably he had some friend at court through whose influence and on whose security he was released; for his name appears in October 1586 in a list of 'priests that have been prisoners and were out upon bond.'¹ In 1587 we again find him in prison among the priests who were shut up in Wisbeach Castle.² His presence here proves that he possessed an independent fortune; for Elizabeth was economical in her cruel tyranny, and only those who could maintain themselves were sent to Wisbeach, while poorer prisoners were either banished or hanged. Here F. Buckley was probably initiated into a sort of religious life; for the prisoners were so numerous that under the guidance of secular priests the greater part of them had formed themselves into a community, and followed a rule. At the end of three years, in 1590, he left Wisbeach and went abroad; but whether he was banished or made his escape we do not know.

During his imprisonment at Wisbeach F. Buckley had gained a religious vocation. Immediately after he recovered his liberty he went to Pontoise, and received the habit of S. Francis. Soon after he proceeded to Rome, where for about three years he lived in the Monastery of the Ara Cœli. To one who had already borne the cross and practised the hardships of poverty, the further sacrifice of his worldly goods would have cost little. But it needed more than ordinary humility to enter religion at

¹ State Paper Office, March 3d, 1583; Harleian MSS. vol. ccclx. fol. 10, ap. Rambler, new series, vol. xi. p. 49.

² Challoner, Missionary Priests, vol. i. p. 194.

nearly sixty years of age, and by placing himself among the novices, to submit himself to religious superiors, who were probably his inferiors in years, suffering, and spiritual experience.

The seminaries for the conversion of England were at this time exciting the greatest enthusiasm in Rome. It was now that S. Philip Neri, when he met the young students of the English College, would salute them in the words of the hymn of the Holy Innocents, 'Salvete, flores martyrum.' They were also in the habit of going to him to get his blessing before they set out for the land of martyrdom. The Franciscans, who were bound by statute to send promising subjects to infidel and heretic lands, could not but share the spirit that breathed around them. F. Buckley, as soon as his religious training was finished, offered himself for the English mission and was accepted. Before starting he had an audience of the Pope, Clement VIII., who embracing him and giving him his blessing, said, 'Go, for I believe you are a true son of S. Francis. Pray to God for me and His Holy Church.' Doubtless, too, he went to Sta. Maria in Vallicella to receive the blessing of the aged S. Philip.

In 1593 he arrived in London, where he stayed some time in the house which F. John Gerard, the Jesuit, had taken for the reception of priests, and placed under the care of Mrs. Ann Line.¹ He remained in London, however, only a few months, and then went into the country, where, as F. Garnet writes, he laboured for 'about three years in tilling the vineyard of Christ with no small profit.' He was then again put into prison, where he was kept 'about two years, during the latter part of which time he was treated with less rigour and had a certain amount of liberty. The quantity of good he did was

¹ This heroic woman was executed for religion in 1601.

incredible, through the great concourse of Catholics that came to him.¹ So highly was he thought of by his own brethren that they gave the seal of the province into his charge, and thus made him their Provincial.

At length a spy informed Topcliffe, the celebrated priest-catcher, that F. Buckley before his capture had visited in prison Mr. Robert Barnes and Mrs. Jane Wiseman, both of whom were remarkable for their zeal in receiving and protecting priests; that he had spent two days with them, had said Mass for them, and had received alms from them. Topcliffe accordingly laid an accusation against all three.

On the 3d July 1598 they were arraigned for treason at the King's Bench, Westminster. Mrs. Wiseman refused to be tried by jury, 'because,' as she said, 'she did not choose to let simple fellows damn themselves in ignorance by giving an unjust verdict against her.' She was therefore condemned to the *peine forte et dure*; that is to say, to be crushed to death with a heavy door over her and a sharp stone under her. But on account of her rank and her good name the sentence was not carried out; and she was only removed to a more loathsome prison, where she pined for about five years, till on James's accession she was pardoned and returned home. Mr. Barnes, too, was condemned, but his sentence also was commuted to imprisonment.

F. Buckley was then arraigned for going over the seas, for being made a priest by authority from Rome, and for returning again to England. He answered, 'If this be a crime I must own myself guilty; for I am a priest, and I came over to England to gain as many souls as I could to Christ. But I deny that I have ever intermeddled directly or indirectly in any manner of treason.' The Lord Jus-

¹ Ap. Rambler, as before.

tice answered, 'You are not charged with any matter of treason, neither is there any matter of treason to be objected against you, except that you are a priest and have come into England; nor is there anything further needed. For by your own confession you are within the compass of the law.' The whole bench pressed him to say that he would be tried by God and the country, *i.e.* by jury; but he resolutely refused, declaring, 'I will not have my blood required of men ignorant in the law. I place myself and my cause before God and the bench. You have made the laws, and therefore you must know best what is the meaning of them.' He was accordingly condemned to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. Ten years had now elapsed since the disastrous failure of the Spanish Armada had removed every ground for the pretence that persecution was required for the safety of the queen and the country. But during this time the rack and the gibbet had scarcely ever been idle. The nation was weary of the constant and unnecessary bloodthirstiness of Elizabeth and her ministers; and therefore the sentence on F. Buckley directed that he should be executed at 'seven o'clock in the morning, in order that few persons should see him.' On hearing the sentence he fell on his knees, and in a loud voice gave thanks to God.

On the 12th July he was drawn on a hurdle to S. Thomas Watering's. Kneeling down at the foot of the gallows, he prayed for a short time. Then standing up, he declared upon his salvation that neither Mr. Barnes nor Mrs. Wiseman had ever given him one penny in silver. Topcliffe answered, 'But gold they did give you.' He replied quickly, 'Nor yet gold.' He further protested that he had not said Mass in their presence. Topcliffe exclaimed, 'No, for they were public prayers, there being no super-altar.' F. Buckley replied, 'There are no such things,

Master Topcliffe; neither did I say any public prayers at all in their hearing.' Being then charged with saying private prayers, he answered, 'I confess, with thanks to Almighty God for that grace, that I said such short and secret prayers as I have ever used after I was newly risen. And so I will do as long as I live, do you, Mr. Topcliffe, what you will.' He then knelt down to his private devotions. While he prayed Topcliffe, in order to excite the crowd round the scaffold against him by making them think he had spoken disrespectfully of the queen and called her a wicked woman and a reprobate, showed them a paper which he asserted had been written by Mr. Barnes, in which among other things it was said that a possessed person under exorcism having cried out that it was useless to pray for the queen, the priest had answered, 'Wretch, you do not know what God has determined; even to the last moment of life there is time for repentance.' Though F. Buckley had never seen this paper and its contents did not at all concern him, yet Topcliffe made use of it to stir up the crowd against him. But the holy priest was rapt in prayer to God and heeded him not. After about a quarter of an hour he rose from his knees and Topcliffe helped him into the cart. But the hangman having forgotten to bring a rope, he was kept waiting a whole hour under the gallows.

During this interval he declared to the surrounding crowd that he was innocent, and that up to that time he had never said a word or imagined a thought against the queen, the State or the realm, nor wished them more hurt than he did at that very instant to his own soul. He protested that he was free from all treason, the Lord Chief Justice having openly declared in the presence of a hundred persons at the least that there was no matter of treason objected

against him, nor anything more than that he was a priest and of the Order of S. Francis. The under-marshal confirmed his words, saying that this was quite true. Thereupon a gentleman in the crowd cried out with great earnestness that an innocent man was about to be put to death.

‘Patience awhile, sir,’ answered Topcliffe; ‘you shall soon see what manner of innocent he is.’ Then turning to F. Buckley, he said, ‘Tell me, if the Pope excommunicated the queen, or tried to turn her out of her kingdom in order to encourage Papistry, what would you do, or what would you advise others to do?’ But F. Buckley, taking no notice of his question, continued his former speech, saying that he daily prayed for the prosperity of her majesty, and so he did now publicly, praying God with all humility to grant her grace and preserve her both in body and soul, that she might live and be His faithful servant.’ Topcliffe then accused him and all other priests and Catholics of disloyalty towards her majesty, whom they would willingly kill if they could. But F. Buckley answered, ‘I am certain that I myself, and all other priests and Catholics, are ready to suffer much more for the good of the queen than you are, Master Topcliffe, though your cruelty alone has been sufficient to make her odious to all the priests in Christendom.’ At last a horseman was seen galloping towards them, and the excitement in the crowd was immense when a cry was raised, ‘A reprieve, a reprieve!’ But to the hundreds of anxious inquiring voices the horseman answered, dangling the rope, ‘Ay, ay, here it is!’ So great had been the feeling caused by F. Buckley’s speech, that when the hangman whipped the horses to drag away the cart, three or four stalwart fellows held them back till he had finished what he was saying. He prayed repeatedly in a loud voice, ‘Sweet Jesus, have mercy on my

soul.' The Under-marshal saying in derision that he forgot our Blessed Lady, he added, 'Blessed Queen of heaven, be my advocate and pray for me now and ever.' Then saying as before, 'Sweet Jesus, have mercy upon my soul,' and raising his hands as far as the cords with which he was bound permitted, as the usual sign for absolution by some priest who was in the crowd, he desired all Catholics who were present to say one 'Credo,' and pray for him. Topcliffe beginning to rail against him 'most barbarously and bitterly,' he begged, if they would not give him leave to speak, they would at least not interrupt him in his prayers, for he had come hither to suffer death for his conscience and his priesthood alone. While he was recommending his soul to God with unchangeable courage and constancy the cart was taken away, and the crowd insisted that he should be allowed to hang till he was quite dead. He was then taken down and quartered. His head was set on a pole over against the pillory in Southwark, where it remained for two days, with so cheerful and smiling a countenance that crowds flocked to see it. Whereupon the officers took it down and scratched the face with their nails and with gunpowder to disfigure it, and then put it up again. But in a short time it was secretly taken away and kept as a relic. His quarters were hung on four trees by the roadside on the way to Newington and Lambeth, and one of them bled freshly two days after. Before long they also were carried away, though not without great danger, two young gentlemen of good family being apprehended and committed to prison for making the attempt. One of his forequarters was long kept at Pontoise, in the Franciscan convent where he was professed.¹ Shortly before his execution F. Buckley handed over the seal of the Province to F. William Stanny,

¹ Challoner, *Missionary Priests*, vol. i. p. 195.

whom he thus appointed his successor in the provincialship.

F. Garnet mentions another Franciscan who was then in England, whom he hoped he might get to write F. Buckley's life. He describes him as 'a great servant of God, who goes about working with us, and who, after a very long and perilous journey, was taken by the heretics, but effected his escape in a manner that evinced great coolness and courage, and is now in safety.'¹ But unhappily we know neither his name nor anything more about him.

CHAPTER IX.

FOUNDATION OF THE SECOND PROVINCE.

THE hopes of relief which Catholics cherished on the accession of James I. were quickly dispelled. The severe persecution continued till 1629, with only a brief interval, from foreign political motives, in 1622. It was, however, less sanguinary, for the bloodthirst of the Tudors had given place to the rapacity of the Scottish king. Year after year more and more rigorous penal laws were made. Not only were the Catholics fined twenty pounds per lunar month for each member of their families who did not attend the Protestant church, two-thirds of their estates being seized in default of payment, but the king was in the habit of assigning to his favourites a certain number of Catholics, 'to make profit of them,'² as it

¹ F. Garnet, who calls F. Buckley Godofredus Mauricius, wrote an account of his death three days after it took place (Challoner, *Missionary Priests*).

² *Ms.* in State Paper Office, ap. Dodd, ed. Tierney, vol. iv. appendix ix. p. 75.

was officially styled; that is to say, to collect the usual fines for him, and then to squeeze out for their own benefit as much more as they possibly could by discovering, or inventing, further claims that the crown had, or might be fraudulently proved to have, on them. The whole country was overrun with pursuivants and other inquisitors, hunting up what was the income of the Catholic nobility and gentry and what further claims might be made on them, extorting much more than was legally due, and enforcing their demands with the most cruel and vexatious tyranny. The prisons were filled to overflowing with Catholics, some of whom had been confined for twenty-six and others for thirty-eight years. Catholic homes were broken up, families were dispersed, and not only were the Catholic nobility and gentry degraded from their hereditary position, but many of them were reduced to poverty, or even to actual want.

The Catholics, however, met their sufferings with wonderful courage and constancy. Some fled to foreign countries, where they were received with extraordinary kindness; while others, roused into energy by the cruelty with which they were treated, flung aside all worldly considerations, and boldly avowing their faith defied their enemies to do their worst. The priests were living, so to say, like birds, now on one bush, now on another, in constant hiding, not daring to appear in London, and even moving about in the country at great risk. Notwithstanding, in 1610 there were no less than two hundred and forty secular priests in the country, besides Capuchins, Franciscans, Benedictines, Jesuits, and Irish priests; and F. Pollard wrote, that in travelling eighty miles, from Lincoln to thirty miles beyond York, a Catholic house, for the most part inhabited by persons of good position, was to be met with at distances of

at most every six miles, and generally of every three.¹

Above fifty years had now elapsed since Elizabeth had banished the Franciscan Order from England, and eighty since its first dispersion by Henry. In spite of the cruel and unremitting persecution the English Province had been kept in existence in the irregular way already told. But with the lapse of years the old friars of Henry's and Mary's reigns died out, and their successors either perished on the scaffold or in fetid prisons, or were driven abroad; so that there was reason to fear that this province, which for centuries had been the most flourishing of the Order and had produced so many saints and martyrs, would be totally exterminated. But through its interior supernatural energy this calamity was averted, and by means of a remarkable course of providential circumstances it revived and renewed its youth, like the eagles.²

There was at Lichfield, in Staffordshire, a respectable Protestant family called Genings.³ The eldest son, Edmund, was born in 1567, and from his childhood was remarkable for docility, modesty, and thoughtfulness. When he was about sixteen years of age he was recommended by his schoolmaster to be page to Mr. Richard Sherwood, a Catholic gentleman. In his family he was converted to the Catholic faith; and the next year when his master gave up his worldly position and went to Rheims to become a priest, he followed his example and devoted himself to God's service. After studying for some years at

¹ Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers, third series, p. 467.

² Ps. cii. 5.

³ Challoner, vol. i. p. 143. This account of F. Edmund Genings is taken partly from the Douai Diary, but principally from the life of him by his brother John, which was published at S. Omer in 1614.

Rheims he was ordained priest by special dispensation in 1590, when he was only twenty-three years of age, and immediately afterwards he set out for the English mission.

The English coasts being at that time very strictly guarded, it was difficult for priests to land in England, and consequently F. Genings and two priests who were with him were put on shore at the risk of their lives on the side of a high cliff near Whitby. After escaping from a pursuivant F. Genings spent six months in the northern counties, and then proceeded to Lichfield, hoping to gain the souls of his family. He found, however, that all his relatives were dead, except one brother of whom he heard a bad character, and who was in London. Thither he went in search of him; but he failed to find him in any of the places where he had reason to suppose that he might be, and at the end of a month he resolved to leave town and go into the country for a time.

A few days before his intended departure as he was walking by S. Paul's a strange feeling suddenly came over him; his face glowed, his hair felt as if it were standing on end, his limbs trembled as if for fear, and his whole body was bathed in a cold sweat. Looking on this unaccountable feeling as a warning from his guardian angel that he was in danger, he turned round to see if any one was pursuing him; but there being only a youth in a brown cloak he went on to the place where he was about to say Mass. Again, on the morning of his departure as he was returning to his inn at Ludgate-hill after saying Mass, the same strange feeling came over him, and turning round to look who was behind him he again saw only a youth in a brown cloak. Feeling certain that this must be his brother John he went up to him, and found on questioning him that it was indeed he. Whereupon he told him that he was his kinsman, and

was called Ironmonger, which was the name by which he passed; and he asked him what had become of his brother Edmund. The youth answered that he had heard that he was gone to Rome to the Pope and was become a traitor to God and his country, and that if he returned he would certainly be hanged. F. Genings, smiling at the boy's folly, answered that he had heard on the contrary that his brother was a very honest man, who loved both the queen and his country, but God above all. He gradually made himself known to his brother and tried to convert him; but he did not tell him that he was a priest. Finding, however, that he was not at present in proper dispositions he bade him adieu, promising after his return from the country to confide to him some matters of great importance.

F. Genings remained in the country following out his missionary vocation for more than a year, and did not return to London till the 7th of November 1591. On the following morning, as he was saying Mass at the house of Mr. Swithin Wells in Gray's-inn-fields, in the presence of two priests, Mrs. Wells, and three other lay persons, Topcliffe, the priest-catcher, broke in on them, and when Mass was finished—for the gentlemen compelled him to wait till it was over—carried them off to Newgate. Mr. Wells happened to be absent, and did not know that the Mass was about to be celebrated in his house. But on his return, because he said that he wished he had been present and he thought his house highly honoured by having had the Divine Sacrifice offered in it, he too was put in irons and shut up in Newgate. On the 4th of December they were all condemned to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, F. Genings and Mr. Wells before the house of the latter in Gray's-inn-fields, and the others at Tyburn.

On the 10th of December they were brought out—

for execution. But Mrs. Wells, to her great grief, was reprieved and sent back to prison, where she remained till her death in 1602 after above ten years' imprisonment. F. Genings and Mr. Wells were executed, according to the sentence, before Mr. Wells's house in Gray's-inn-fields. Scarcely had F. Genings been thrown from the ladder when Topcliffe caused the rope to be cut; and Fr. Genings, being but slightly stunned, stood on his feet and raised up his hands towards heaven, till the hangman tripped up his heels so as to throw him down on the block on which he was to be quartered. While the executioner was doing his bloody work the violence of the pain made F. Genings call out, 'O, it smarts!' On hearing which Mr. Wells replied, 'Alas, sweet soul, thy pain is great indeed, but almost past. Pray for me now, most holy saint, that mine may come.' After he was ripped up and his bowels were cast into the fire—if credit may be given to hundreds of people standing by, and to the hangman himself—the blessed martyr, while his heart was in the executioner's hand, uttered the words, 'Sancte Gregori, ora pro me.' On hearing them the hangman exclaimed with a most wicked oath, 'See, his heart is in my hand, and yet Gregory is in his mouth! O egregious Papist!'

The martyr's brother, John Genings, gives us the following account of what befell himself:

'John Genings being in London at the very time of his brother's apprehension, condemnation, and execution, hearing of the same, rather rejoiced than in any way bewailed the untimely and bloody end of his nearest kinsman, hoping thereby to be rid of all persuasions which he mistrusted he should receive from him touching the Catholic religion, having been brought up as a Protestant, in great prejudices to Catholics, and rather inclined to Puritanism. But about ten days after his execution, towards night,

having spent all that day in sport and jollity, being weary with play, he resorted home, where to repose himself he went into a secret chamber. He was no sooner there set down but forthwith his heart began to be heavy, and he began to weigh how idly he had spent that day. Amidst these thoughts there presently was represented to his mind a strange imagination and apprehension of the death of his brother; and amongst other things how he had not long before forsaken all worldly pleasures, and for his religion only endured intolerable torments. Then, within himself he made long discourses concerning his religion and his brother's, comparing the Catholic manner of living with his, and finding the one to embrace pain and mortification and the other to seek pleasure, the one to live strictly and the other licentiously, the one to fear sin, the other to run into all kinds of sin. Upon this, being struck with exceeding terror and remorse he wept bitterly, desiring God, after his fashion, to illuminate his understanding, that he might see and perceive the truth. O, what great joy and consolation did he feel at that instant! What reverence on the sudden did he begin to bear to the Blessed Virgin and to the Saints of God, which before he had never scarce heard talk of! What strange motions, as it were inspirations, with exceeding readiness of will to change his religion, took possession of his soul! and what a heavenly conceit he had now of his dear brother's felicity! He imagined he saw him; he thought he heard him. In this ecstasy of mind he made a vow upon the spot, as he lay prostrate on the ground, to forsake kindred and country to find out the true knowledge of his brother's faith. Which vow he soon after performed, and departed England without advertising any one of his friends, and went beyond the seas to execute his promise.¹

¹ Challoner, vol. i. p. 150.

After some years he entered the English College at Douai, where in 1607 he was ordained priest. In the course of the following year he joined the mission in England. Here he laboured for six years as a secular priest. But in 1614, feeling himself drawn to the Franciscan Order and seeing that it was almost extinct in England, he was inspired with a great desire to revive it. With that view he besought F. William Stanny, the Commissary-General, to give him the habit. Fr. Stanny being struck with his zeal and devotion, and auguring great success from his virtues and talents, joyfully granted his request; and soon after by special authority he handed over to him the seal of the Province, which had been preserved for eighty years by little less than miracle.

F. Genings's next step was to persuade several students in the colleges abroad, especially at Douai, to join him and make their novitiate with him in the convent of the Fathers of Strict Observance, or Recollects, at Ypres. At the end of the novitiate, in 1616, he and his little community of only six persons settled at Gravelines. In the following year, through the munificence of the Infanta Isabella who was a Tertiary of the Order,¹ of several Flemish Bishops, and of the convents where already so many of the English exiles had been received with such wonderful charity and had laid their bones, they were enabled to take a house at Douai, thus adding another hive of saints and martyrs to the four that already existed in that highly favoured town.²

Since the year 1503 the Observants had been sometimes called Recollects, because their rule bound them to set apart Houses of Recollection for such of

¹ Certamen Seraphicum, p. 66.

² The four others were the English Benedictine College, the English College for secular clergy, the Scotch Jesuit College, and the Irish College.

the brethren as wished to devote themselves entirely to contemplation, or who desired to give themselves to it for a time as the best preparation for active work. The new community of Douai took the name of Friars Minor Recollects, and placed their house under the invocation of S. Bonaventure. Their first Superior was F. Bonaventure Jackson, and the second F. Jerome of S. Bonaventure Pickford. The Benedictine Fathers of Douai held out a helping hand to them by opening their schools to the young friars till they should be provided with professors in their own house.¹

In the year 1618, in the General Chapter held at Salamanca, F. Benignus of Genoa, the Minister-General, and the Definitors of the Order, sanctioned the foundation of the convent of S. Bonaventure for the restoration of the English Province and as a seminary for the education of English friars; and they authorised F. Genings to summon all the English Recollects who were labouring in England or were scattered about in various convents of the Order abroad, to place themselves under obedience to him.²

Already F. Genings had several promising subjects. One of the little knot at Gravelines was F. Francis à Sta. Clara Davenport, who was afterwards one of the best theologians of the day and held a brilliant position at the court of Charles I. Another was F. William Thompson, LL.D., and also a good theologian. A third was F. Philip Loraine, in religion Lawrence of S. Edmund, afterwards professor of theology and one of the most efficient members of the Province. F. Bonaventure Jackson had held a good position at the Franciscan convent at Mechlin, whence he had been transferred on the foundation of the new community at Douai. He afterwards laboured for several years in England, gaining many souls, winning universal love and esteem, and meriting the

¹ Certamen Seraphicum, p. 132.

² Ibid. p. 18.

confessor's crown by his great sufferings and long imprisonments. F. Jerome of S. Bonaventure Pickford had come to them from the English College. He was a very learned man, but was chiefly distinguished by his insatiable missionary zeal. He wrote several controversial books, which had such success that his Protestant opponents were in the habit of sedulously hunting for them and destroying them. In 1619 F. Bell, afterwards a martyr, was transferred to the new house from the Province of the Immaculate Conception in Spain; and in 1624 F. Paul of S. Magdalen Heath, also a martyr, received the habit.

In England there was F. William Stanny, to whose zeal the Province owed its birth. In 1617 he helped on its revival by publishing a manual, *On the Third Order of S. Francis, commonly called the Order of Penance; for the Use of those who desire to lead a Holy Life, and do Penance in their own Houses*. There was also F. John, in religion Nicholas Day, who was born in the parish of S. Cross, *alias* Halywell, near Oxford. He had been professed in the Province of the Immaculate Conception in Spain, where he was highly esteemed for his piety, and had held the offices of Professor of Theology and Preacher in the convent of Segovia.¹ He was on the mission in England when the new Province was founded, and was transferred to it. He afterwards held the offices of Definitor, Preacher, Professor of Divinity, and Custos at Douai, and in 1647 was appointed Confessor to the convent of S. Elizabeth at Nieuport. But he laboured chiefly in his native place, where he was held in repute as a very 'learned friar;' and at his death he was buried at the west end of St. Ebb's Church in Oxford, where the bones of his brethren of the First Province had been laid.²

¹ Certamen Seraphicum, p. 130.

² Wood, Athen. Oxon. vol. iv. p. 1227.

F. Genings did not confine his care to the English friars. He also provided for the nuns of the Order. Already in 1609 a community of English Poor Clares had been founded at Gravelines under the Bishop of the diocese. It became famous through the number of communities which proceeded from it. The nuns, however, did not wish to transfer their obedience from the Bishop, though they were always on the most friendly footing with the fathers of the new Province, receiving confessors from them, and helping F. Genings in his foundations.

In 1619 two English ladies, Mrs. Lucy Sleford and Mrs. Petronilla Kemp, both of them widows, assumed under his direction the habit of the Third Order at Brussels with the intention of founding an English convent. In the following year Mrs. Kemp was summoned by F. Stanny to England, whence she brought back six novices. In 1621 F. Andrew à Soto, the Commissary-General of Belgium, sanctioned the establishment of the community at Brussels under the invocation of S. Elizabeth, and appointed Margaret de Castro, a nun of the Convent of S. James at Ghent, and Beatrix Ramines of Valenciennes to take temporary charge of it. In the following year these ladies were replaced by two sisters, Margaret and Elizabeth Radcliffe, from the convent at Gravelines. They governed the infant community for four years, during which they fully imbued it with the spirit of the Order and secured its prosperity by the admission of thirty-nine novices. The community of S. Elizabeth being now fully established, the sisters Radcliffe returned to Gravelines, and the nuns proceeding to the regular election of their own officers chose for their first abbess Catherine Frances Wilcox, widow of a silk-mercator of London, and one of the first novices whom Mrs. Kemp had brought from England. Their poverty and the diffi-

culty which they experienced in finding the means of subsistence in Brussels, compelled them in 1637 to remove to Nieuport, where, however, they suffered greatly from the unwholesomeness of the climate, to which no less than thirty-seven fell victims. So straitened, too, were their means that some of them returned for a while to their relatives in England; and Mrs. Angela Jerningham went with six others to Paris, where in 1670 they affiliated themselves to the Order of the Conception, and were henceforth commonly called the Blue Nuns.¹ In 1662 the community of Nieuport removed to the old palace of Princenhoff in Bruges, once inhabited by the dukes of Burgundy and in which the Archduke Philip, father of the Emperor Charles V., was born, which had been bought for them by their friends. Here they remained for above a hundred and thirty years.²

F. Genings also established a community of Poor Clares at Aire in Artois by a filiation from the convent at Gravelines in 1629, when Sister Margaret Radcliffe, with eighteen choir sisters, two novices,

¹ Dodd, vol. iii. book i. art. iii. p. 184. When the French Revolution broke out the Blue Nuns were for some time in imminent danger; but they at length escaped to England, where they were received most hospitably by Lady Jerningham, who had been educated by them. She now settled them in a house at Norwich, where they gradually died out.

² In 1794 the French Revolution drove them to England. Mr. Thomas Weld of Lullworth, whose first cousin was then their Abbess, placed them in Winchester. In 1807-8 they removed to Taunton, where they built an abbey in honour of our Lady of Dolours which they now inhabit. It is a remarkable proof of the discipline and mutual love that have always reigned in this community, that though the election of the Abbess is triennial, yet during two hundred and fifty-nine years there have been only thirteen abbesses, the same nuns having been constantly reelected. The present Abbess, Mrs. Frances Agnes Jerningham, has held the office since May 1847 (Oliver, Collections, p. 135).

and three lay sisters, placed themselves with the permission of their superiors under the friars of the new Province.¹

CHAPTER X.

PERSECUTION UNDER CHARLES I.

ABOUT the time of Charles I.'s accession F. Francis à Sta. Clara Davenport was sent to Rome to solicit the restoration of the Province. His petition was considered premature. But in the General Chap-

¹ Oliver Collections, pp. 132-5. In 1794 the Poor Clares of Aire were confined as prisoners in their convent, and their confessor, F. Pacificus Kingdon, was thrown into a dungeon, and would have been guillotined had not the news of Robespierre's death reached Aire in time to save his life. The nuns were kept in confinement till 1799, when they got leave to go to England. Mr. Thomas Weld of Lullworth, whose only sister, Mary Euphrasia, was in the community, placed them in his house at Britwell in Oxfordshire, whence in 1813 they removed to Clare House near Plymouth. In 1834 they went abroad with the intention of settling once more at Gravelines. But they met with so many difficulties that they soon returned to England and joined the Poor Clares at Scorton in Yorkshire. This latter community represented the second filiation from the house at Gravelines to Dunkirk in 1652. The French Revolution had driven them also to England. They first found a refuge at Churchill Wood near Worcester, whence in 1807 they removed to Scorton. A third filiation of sixteen nuns from the house at Gravelines settled in 1652 at Rouen, whence they too were driven by the Revolution to England. They are now at S. Clare's Abbey, Darlington. The nuns of Scorton having within the last few years united themselves to them, the community now at S. Clare's Abbey represents F. Genings's house at Aire, the filiation to Dunkirk, that to Rouen, and also the mother house at Gravelines whence the three above filiations issued. We are indebted in a great measure to the kindness of the Abbess of S. Clare's for the above particulars.

ter held at Rome in May 1625, F. Bernardine de Senis, with the sanction of Pope Urban VIII., decreed that the Province should be restored whenever an adequate number of members should be collected; and meanwhile it was constituted a Custody, and the Superior, F. John Genings, was given the title of Custos, but with all the power of a Provincial.

F. Genings was already at work in England. In the beginning of this year he summoned F. Bonaventure Jackson, who was then holding for the second time the office of Guardian of S. Bonaventure's Convent, to join him on the mission. F. Francis à Sta. Clara on his return from Rome took the place of F. Jackson as Guardian. At the end of the usual term of three years he was succeeded by F. George of S. William Perrot, 'whose memory is blessed because he was a great lover of the brethren.'¹

The community continued to prosper from day to day. The number of novices rapidly increased, and regular classes of theology and philosophy were formed. After the lapse of four years not only the friars, but the principal English Catholics who saw and were best qualified to appreciate the great work which they were carrying on, represented to the heads of the Order that the proper time for restoring the Province was come. Accordingly in the General Chapter held at Madrid in 1629, F. Bernardine de Senis decreed its restoration, and appointed F. John Genings to be the first Provincial, F. Francis à Sta. Clara to be Custos of Custodies, and FF. Bonaventure Jackson, Nicholas Day, Jerome Pickford, and Francis Bell to be Definitors.

F. Joseph Bergaigne, at that time Commissary-General for the Provinces of Belgium and Great Britain, and subsequently Archbishop of Cambrai, was directed to carry out these arrangements. He

¹ Chapter Register, p. 110, ap. Oliver, Collections.

summoned the fathers to assemble at S. Elizabeth's Convent at Brussels, where on the First Sunday in Advent, November 30, 1630, he opened the first Provincial Chapter in due form. The above appointments by the General Chapter were first officially declared. Afterwards F. Bell was elected Guardian of the convent of S. Bonaventure and Professor of Hebrew, F. Heath, Vicar or Vice-President of the convent, F. Francis à Sta. Clara, head professor of theology, F. William Thompson, second professor of theology, F. Philip Loraine, professor of philosophy and master of novices, F. Giles Willoughby, confessor of S. Elizabeth's Convent at Brussels, and F. Peter of Alcantara Capes, confessor to the Poor Clares at Aire.¹ All these priests were men of rare talent, zeal, and holiness. Thus the new Province started under happy auspices, which its future career fully verified.

Up to this time the persecution in England had been carried on with unabated severity. It had been met by the Recollects with a spirit which proved them to be true sons and heirs of the old English Province. King Charles on his marriage a few weeks after his accession, had, it is true, signed an engagement that Catholics should be free from molestation in their persons and property, and should have greater liberty than hitherto in the exercise of their religion. But he fulfilled his promise with his usual bad faith. Protestants complaining of the number of persons who attended the queen's chapel and of the pardon of six priests at her intercession, the Parliament petitioned him to put into execution the laws against Popish recusants, as Catholics were then called. He answered on 8th August 1625, that he had married the person, not the religion, of his queen, and he was only following the dictates of

¹ Oliver, p. 552.

his conscience when he adopted the measures now pressed upon his notice.¹ On the 14th August he issued a proclamation reviving the execution of the penal laws. The King of France remonstrated. But Charles replied that his promises about the Catholics were never intended nor understood to be obligatory, and he could only endeavour to mitigate the penal laws by softening the rigour of their execution.² In the following November he sent away the queen's French attendants; and a war with France, which lasted till 1629, was the consequence.

The restoration of the Province to its position and honours nearly coincided with the return of peace. For the next twelve years the position of Catholics in England was much improved. No Parliament was called to remonstrate against indulgence to them and make it politically necessary to persecute them. The queen, who by this time had gained great influence over Charles, exerted herself zealously in their favour. The Pope's Nuncio, Cuneo, was on intimate terms with the king and queen.³ The principal persons at court were Catholics, though often secretly, and the king was considered to be neuter. Catholics freely attended the queen's chapel, the church of the Capuchins attached to the palace, or the chapels of the Catholic ambassadors; and though on coming out they were sometimes taken up, yet by the payment of a sum of money or the queen's intercession they soon recovered their liberty.⁴ The usual fines, which were now regarded as a regular part of the king's revenue, continued, indeed, to be levied, and the pursuivants still harassed the Catholics. But imprison-

¹ Commons Journals, i. 802-7; Lords, iii. 471-81; Dodd, vol. v. part vi. art. i.

² Rymer, xviii. 223-25, ap. Dodd, vol. v. part vi. art. i. p. 161, note Tierney.

³ Ranke, Hist. Eng. appendix, sect. i. ⁴ Ibid. p. 444.

ments were less frequent ; and with the exception of Thomas Southern, a secular priest, who was executed at Newcastle in 1634,¹ no Catholic was put to death. The sons of S. Francis occupied a good position at court. The Capuchins were the queen's spiritual advisers, and had a convent attached to the palace, and F. Francis à Sta. Clara was her chaplain.

This distinguished Franciscan was born in Coventry, and was descended from the Davenports of Henbury in Cheshire. He was brought up as a Protestant, and in 1613, when he was fifteen, he went to Merton College, Oxford. About two years after he was converted through conversing with a Catholic priest. He then went to Douai, and the following year joined F. Genings's novices at Ypres, and afterwards his little community at Gravelines. He was sent to study at the University of Salamanca, where he acquired among Catholics the character of being one of the ablest divines of his time ; while Wood, the Protestant historian of Oxford, records that ' he was excellently well versed in school divinity, in the Fathers and Councils, in philosophers, in ecclesiastical and profane histories.'² As soon as a sufficient number of novices had been collected at Douai he returned thither, and was the first lecturer on divinity ; and on account of his transcendent abilities he received the degree of Doctor. After presiding for several years in the school to which he imparted his own great reputation, and filling the most honourable offices in the convent, he joined the mission in England. Here the brilliancy of his conversation, his learning, and his conciliatory disposition gained him the acquaintance of the chief persons at court, and even the king and Archbishop Laud treated him with great respect.

¹ Dodd, vol. iii. part vi. book iii. art. vii. p. 172.

² Athen. Oxon. vol. iii. p. 1224.

There was at this time a reaction towards the Catholic faith among the highest and best educated classes, and the idea was entertained that the Anglican and Roman Churches might be united by means of mutual concessions. The king discussed the question of reunion with Cuneo, the Papal Legate;¹ and F. Francis à Sta. Clara held conferences with the most learned Anglicans. So great was F. Francis à Sta. Clara's influence and success in making converts, that in 1640 the House of Commons sent a message to the Lords on the increase of Popery. Mr. Rouse, the Speaker, commenting on the 'advance of the Popish design in the way of treaty,' used the following remarkable words: 'This hath been acted both by writings and conference: Sancta Clara himself saith, "*Doctissimis eorum quibuscunque egi*;" so it seems they have had conferences together. Sancta Clara on his part labours to bring the Articles of our Church to Popery, and some of our side strive to meet him in that way; we have a testimony that the great arch-priest himself hath said, "It were no hard matter to make a reconciliation if a wise man had the handling of it." But I verily believe, that as the state of Papacy stands, a far wiser man than he cannot reconcile us without the loss of our religion. For the Pope being fastened to his errors, even by his chair of inerrability, he still sits unmoved; and so we cannot meet, unless we come wholly to him. A man standing in a boat tied to a rock, when he draws the rope doth not draw the rock to the boat, but the boat to the rock. And Sancta Clara doth (in this somewhat honestly) confess it; for he saith that he dealt in the way of treaty, not to draw the Church to the Protestants, but the Protestants to the Church.'¹

¹ Ranke, vol. v. p. 456.

² Nalson's Impartial Collections, vol. i. p. 791.

During this time of comparative peace the new Franciscan Province made great progress. In 1629 F. John Baptist Bullaker, afterwards a martyr, was transferred to it from the Province of the Immaculate Conception in Spain. In 1631 F. Martin of S. Felix Woodcocke, also a martyr, received the habit. About the same time so did F. Angelus of S. Francis Mason, who was distinguished as a great writer, and is now especially known as the author of the *Certamen Seraphicum*. As the opportunities for preaching were limited the fathers published and circulated a great number of spiritual and controversial books, which bear witness to the activity of their zeal, their intellectual attainments, and the devotion and perfection to which they trained their penitents.

A characteristic of the new Province was great devotion to our Blessed Lady, as if in remembrance that it was in her Dowry that their field of labour lay. In 1632 in the Congregation held in London it was ordered that every evening after Compline the hymn 'Tota Pulchra' should be said in honour of her Immaculate Conception. At the second Provincial Chapter held at Greenwich in 1634, the convent lately founded at York was dedicated to her under the same title, as also at a later period were several others of their houses. To this great devotion which the young community had inherited from Duns Scotus and the Doctors of the elder Province, may be attributed the fact, that in common with their brethren of the first Province not one of them fell from the faith during the time of persecution.

With the decline of Charles's fortunes his policy changed. In the vain hope of conciliating the Scotch Puritans he declared that 'he loathed the superstition of the Papacy from his very soul,'¹ and Catholics were treated with increased severity. When

¹ Ranke, vol. ii. l. vi. c. vi. p. 95.

Cuneo remonstrated on this infraction of the marriage treaty he answered, 'I shall never break those conditions, but with your permission I will show that I really belong to the religion which I profess.'¹ As his position became worse and worse he was compelled to summon a Parliament, and the blood of Catholics once more began to flow.

The first martyr was William Ward, *alias* Webster. Challoner says the latter was his true name, but he is generally known by the former. Though he was a secular priest, yet as he belonged to the Third Order of S. Francis and wore his cord, he may claim a place among the martyrs of the Order. He was born of Protestant parents of good position at Thornby in Westmoreland at the close of Mary's reign, or the beginning of that of Elizabeth.² He was for seven years a member of Brasenose College, Oxford; but afterwards travelling in Spain with a Catholic gentleman, Mr. Dutton, he was reconciled to the Catholic Church. After his return to England he practised his religion so openly that he was in prison at different times for nearly ten years. He entered the English College at Douai in September 1604, and after being ordained priest he embarked in 1608 to join the mission in England.

A contrary wind drove the ship to Scotland, where he was obliged to land. His priesthood being suspected he was thrown into an underground dungeon, and literally buried alive in total darkness for three years. During this time he was supported by extraordinary grace to bear his intense sufferings, which, far from breaking his spirit, only inflamed his zeal, increased his patience, and endued him with fresh strength, fresh light, and fresh love.

¹ Ranke, vol. ii. l. vii. c. i. p. 125.

² De Marsys says that he was born at Hornby in Cornwall.

After he had spent three years in this school of martyrdom he recovered his freedom and went into England. Here he toiled for thirty years, more than twenty of which he spent in various prisons. Though frequently banished, yet he always returned with renewed zeal for the salvation of souls, preaching not so much by his words as by the example of his austere life. He was a great lover of poverty, and devoted himself especially to visiting and instructing the inmates of cellars and garrets, wearing shabby clothes, and eating coarse food, like the common people with whom he loved to live. So great was his mortification that his friends, who knew that he was rich, but were not in the secret of his life, and were not aware that he wore the cord of S. Francis and denied himself in order to have more to give to the poor, attributed his parsimoniousness to an avaricious spirit. He spent his time chiefly in hearing confessions, and at a period when, as in primitive times, the profession of the faith involved imprisonment, torture, and death, the strictness of his direction and the severity of his reproofs, evidently inspired by fervent charity and administered with paternal love, rendered him very popular. Even ladies of rank living in the world used to say, that notwithstanding the check which he imposed on their thoughts, words, and smallest actions, and the high perfection to which he encouraged them to aspire, they preferred him to confessors who would have given them more liberty.

When he was above eighty years of age the persecution broke out, and his nephew, who was also a priest on the mission, tried to persuade him to retire to a place of safety which he had prepared for him. But worn out as he now was by extreme old age and hard labour, he would not relinquish the prize of martyrdom which was almost within his reach, and he therefore answered that 'he was not

one of the hireling shepherds who fly at the approach of the wolf and abandon their sheep to its ravenous fury.' Mayhew, or Mayo, an apostate Catholic and well-known priest-catcher, observing that he often went to the house of Mr. John Wooton, one of his nephews, obtained an order to search the place, and seized him about midnight on the 15th July 1640. On the 23d of the same month he was tried. Mayhew deposed that he had confessed his sins to him, had been present at his Mass, and had received Holy Communion from his hands. Another witness swore that he knew of his being a priest from common report; and a third, that seven years before he had had him in his custody, and that Roman faculties had been found on him. The judge asking him if he was a priest, he answered, 'No one is obliged to accuse himself. But if you wish to arrive at the truth and to convict me, produce witnesses without reproach, and not like this Mayhew, who may well lie before men since he has broken the faith which he has vowed to God.' He could easily have refuted the other witnesses; but he refrained from doing so, being desirous to lay down his life for Christ. After a few minutes' deliberation the jury found him guilty, and he was condemned to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. He received the sentence with great humility, and returned full of gladness to his prison to prepare himself for death.

The day before his execution he conversed for a long time with a priest who was his fellow-prisoner, and it was noticed that both were so transported with holy joy that they found relief only in floods of tears. He had for many years kept the feast of S. Anne with great solemnity, inviting all his penitents of that name to meet together in his apartment to pay their devotions to the mother of our Blessed Lady. In return, she now obtained for him the favour to finish

his course and win his crown on her feast. Setting before himself the example of our Lord, on the appointed morning he offered up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and gave Communion to the Catholics who were his fellow-prisoners. His countenance usually was grave and rather melancholy, but this morning every one was surprised at his bright and joyful mien. When his friends brought him a better coat than he was in the habit of wearing, he accepted it without hesitation, saying, 'You are right to dress me better than usual, since I am going to a more splendid banquet and a more joyful wedding than any at which I have ever been present.' The jailer on taking his leave said, 'Good-bye, Mr. Ward. I hope we shall meet again in heaven.' But he answered, 'By no means, unless you change your life and become a Catholic. This is the truth, in defence of which I am about to shed my blood.' He spoke in the same terms to a woman, a fellow-prisoner, who he knew had been leading a bad life.

It was about eight o'clock in the morning when he was laid on the hurdle to be conveyed to Tyburn. As he passed along Holborn, where a number of Catholics lived, he looked up full of joy to their windows and gave them his blessing as well as he could with his manacled hands. Noticing that one of his penitents was weeping bitterly he said to him, 'Why do you weep, my son?' The young man answered, 'For love of you, my father.' He replied, 'If you love me, weep not for my death. I can yet live if I will, but it is my joy to die for this cause, and therefore you have no reason to weep.' To another he said that he was infinitely happy to be able now to lay down voluntarily that life which in the course of nature he could not hope to keep much longer, possibly not even for a single month. At the place of execution his life was offered him if he would abjure

his faith. But rejoicing that his innocence was so publicly manifested he answered, 'If God had given me a thousand lives, I should deem myself happy to sacrifice them all for my priesthood and the Catholic Church.' He told the people that he died solely for being a priest. The marshal taking up his words said it was not for religion, but for seducing the people, that he was put to death. He replied, 'I have seduced no one, but I have led many in the way of salvation. Would to God that I had converted more—nay, even all England! Believe, I entreat you, that it is the love which I have for you that makes me speak thus; for if you wish to enter into Paradise you must embrace the Catholic religion, which was so long revered by your ancestors.'

After praying silently for a full quarter of an hour he prayed aloud for the king, the queen, the royal family, and all the kingdom; and more especially he besought God to give to all those who were to follow him on the road to martyrdom the same strength which He had granted to him. As the cart on which he stood was drawn from under him his last words were, 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, receive my soul.' Almost immediately he was cut down; and while he still gave signs of life he was inhumanly ripped up, and his heart, still warm and palpitating, was held up to the people with the words, 'Behold the heart of a traitor.'

The renewal of bloody persecution created a great sensation throughout Europe, and especially at the courts of France and Spain, with both of whom Charles had signed marriage treaties securing to Catholics the practice of their religion, that with the former being still in force. The relics of the victims of Charles's breach of faith were prized by Catholics with the same eagerness as those of the early Christian martyrs had been. Both the French ambassador, the

Comte d'Harcourt, and Count Egmont, afterwards Duc de Gueldres, who was then in England, sent their servants to attend the executions in order to collect them. Count Egmont's servant brought him the ring, diurnal, and handkerchief which F. Ward had thrown with other things to the crowd, just before the cart was drawn away. The Count received them with great reverence; but finding that there was no blood on the handkerchief he gave his own handkerchief to the servant, and bade him go instantly to the place of execution and dip it in the martyr's blood. Other Catholics, however, had anticipated him, and not a single drop of blood remained. The servant therefore groped with his stick among the ashes where the bowels had been burnt, and finding a lump of flesh all parched and singed he snatched it up, and without stopping to shake off the burning coals which stuck to it, wrapped it in the Count's handkerchief. The act had been noticed, but instead of answering the inquiry of the surrounding crowd the man jumped over the park paling. A hue and cry was quickly raised and a crowd followed him as he fled across Hyde Park. Soon he was so beset that escape was impossible. Caring little what became of himself so long as he secured the relic, he pretended to stumble, so as to have an opportunity of depositing his treasure in a bush which he marked, and then, seeming to recover himself, he ran on, thus drawing his pursuers farther and farther from the spot. He was at last seized and taken before a magistrate, but through the Count's interest he was soon released. The next day he returned to the bush and brought away the relic, which proved to be a piece of the martyr's heart. As formerly in the case of S. Lawrence, it was found that the fire which burnt without was weaker than that which burnt within that heart and inflamed it with the love of Christ;

for the hot coals which had stuck to the flesh when it was taken out of the fire, had not burnt the handkerchief in which they were wrapped. For fifteen days the heart remained uncorrupt; at the end of which time the Count out of reverence, in conformity to the custom of the times, had it embalmed. On leaving England in 1645 he took it and the relics of fourteen other martyrs at whose execution he had been present, to Paris, where on July 26th, 1650, he signed and sealed a formal deed of authentication, which is now in the archives of Lille.¹

CHAPTER XI.

F. COLMAN.

THE first member of the Second Province who suffered for the faith was Walter Colman, in religion F. Christopher of S. Clare.² He belonged to an old patrician family in Staffordshire. From his infancy he was educated carefully by pious Catholic parents; and when he became older, in defiance of the difficulty and danger of leaving England, he was sent to carry on his studies in the English College at Douai. At the end of some years he returned home for a time, but finally went to France to finish his education. He then for some years led the usual life of young men in the world. But he was at length drawn to choose the better part; and renouncing all earthly vanities and worldly wealth and honours, he gave himself up to combat his three great enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. With this view he

¹ Rambler, new series, vol. viii. p. 119.

² The life of F. Colman is chiefly taken from the *Certamen Seraphicum*.

applied for admission to the convent of the Recollects at Douai, where he received the habit from F. Francis à Sta. Clara. The date of his clothing is not given by his biographer, F. Angelus Mason, but it must have been between 1625 and 1628, during which time F. Francis was Guardian.

During the year of his novitiate he surpassed his companions in the practice of all the religious virtues. As he had lived for so many years in the world, his novice-master, in order to make more sure of his vocation, imposed upon him unusually severe penances and mortifications. He had a great poetical talent, and he found it a help to his private devotions to write the verses which afterwards formed a part of his book called the *Duel of Death*. But when his novice-master heard what he had been doing he ordered him, as a mortification to his self-love, to throw it into the fire in the sight of the whole community, and he instantly and cheerfully obeyed. He accepted all sacrifices and penances with extraordinary alacrity and joy, being convinced that the most blessed and joyful life is hidden under the most perfect mortification. For, as Blossius has said, 'A soul that is mortified and dead to self is like a bunch of ripe grapes, soft and sweet; but an unmortified soul is like unripe grapes, hard and sour.' Moreover, F. Colman clearly understood that the exterior and interior mortification which are signified by the habit, the cord, and the very name of Minor are especially incumbent on a son of S. Francis. Having thus proved himself in will and practice a true Friar Minor, he made his profession at the end of a year.

In due course of time he was raised to the priesthood and was summoned to England by F. Genings. Scarcely had he landed when he was seized and searched. Being found to be without a shirt, for according to the custom of the Order he wore his

habit next his skin, the suspicions of those who had arrested him were aroused, and they exclaimed, 'Who can this man be who goes about dressed in such strange fashion?' But with great presence of mind he reproved and silenced them by saying, 'Are you not ashamed to expose the poverty of a well-born gentleman, who, having spent all his money on his travels, is returning poor to his native land?' When, however, he refused to take the oath of allegiance their suspicions were confirmed, and he was thrown into prison. Here he did not remain very long, for the persecution was now slackened, and the payment of a sum of money by his friends obtained his release. On recovering his freedom he went to London, where he toiled for the salvation of souls. He now took up the poetic subject which he had attempted during his novitiate, and as a solace in his labours he composed during moments of leisure the book called the *Duel of Death*, which he published with a dedication to the king and queen.

After some years of hard work he was greatly exhausted. As there was then no immediate prospect of persecution to keep him at his post, he got leave to return to the convent at Douai. S. Francis had taught his sons, both by word and example, 'never to be idle, but like the angels on Jacob's ladder to be constantly either ascending to God or descending to their neighbour.'¹ Their time was to be divided between labour for their neighbours' welfare and the tranquil pursuit of contemplation. After descending to procure the salvation of others they were to leave the noise of crowds and retire to solitary and peaceful places, where they could wipe off the dust that had clung to them in their intercourse with men and ascend to converse with God. Hence came the name of Recollects, which they assumed when the Order

¹ Legend, c. xiii.

was reformed. F. Colman spent thus some years at Douai, recruiting his physical and spiritual life. During this time he prepared for the press a book in rhyme on the controversies of the period, and translated into English the life of Angela, a Franciscan tertiary. His stay at Douai could not, however, have extended over many years, for we find him again in England long before the persecution broke out.

His wit and brilliant talents, his placid and cheerful temper, and the polished manners which he had acquired in his social position in his youth made him generally popular and helped on his missionary work. He was always well dressed, as was required by his worldly position and the caution that was necessary to hide his being a priest and friar. Censorious persons were scandalised at what seemed to them contrary to his profession of poverty. But under this worldly exterior he always kept his heart in close union with God by his constant habit of meditating on death. The same subject which, as we have seen, had braced him to meet the trials of his novitiate and had been the solace of his early missionary life, took a leading part in his thoughts during the many years that he stood face to face with death. His great study throughout his life was to learn how to die. He would often say that to one who does so, 'Death is not death, but only a removal from an earthly life to a heavenly one, the end of this world's labours and miseries, and the way to blessedness and imperishable life. Wherefore tortures are not to be feared, since they open the gate to the enjoyment of so much good ; as has been proved by the thousands of martyrs who by means of various torments have offered up the highest and most precious sacrifice to God.'¹

When the persecution was revived F. Colman

¹ Certamen Seraphicum, p. 191.

was taken up and brought successively before different magistrates. He thus had repeated opportunities of offering himself as a holocaust to God. At length on the 8th December 1641 he was placed with seven other priests at the bar of the Old Bailey. After the usual forms had been observed he was asked whether he was a priest. He answered, 'No one is required to accuse himself. Who is there here who can accuse me?' Among the pursuivants was a man called Wadsworth, who had been educated by pious parents, exiles for the faith at the court of Spain; but he had apostatised, and was now a notorious priest-catcher. He swore that he knew F. Colman to be a priest. The judges asked him how he knew it. He answered that he had seen him in the Franciscan habit in the convent of the English Friars Minor at Douai. They then asked whether all who wore this habit were priests. He not only declared that they were, but he confirmed it by an oath. The other witnesses, most of the persons in court, and even some of the judges, knew that this was a falsehood. Notwithstanding, on the sole evidence of this notoriously perjured witness F. Colman was declared guilty, and was condemned with six of the other priests, the seventh being acquitted, to be hanged, drawn, and quartered on the 13th December. They all received their sentence with great joy, and thanked God that they were deemed worthy to suffer for the love of Jesus. But they were not destined to win so quickly the crown which had been the object of their life-long aspiration. Even a rougher road to martyrdom than that of the gibbet and the butchering knife lay before them.

The French ambassador having expressed a great wish that they should not be executed, but banished or imprisoned, the king sent a message to both Houses of Parliament to ask their opinion, and to

press for their pardon on the ground that it might have a beneficial effect on Ireland, which was then in a state of rebellion. After some delay the Commons voted that Walter Colman, and also John Hammon, John Rivers, and John Turner, all three priests of the English College at Douai, should be executed. Hereupon the Lords asked for a conference, 'to know the reasons that induced the Commons to be of opinion that four should be executed and three saved.' After much debate both Houses joined in a petition to the king that 'he would be pleased to take off his reprieve, and that all the seven priests who were condemned might be executed.' The king replied that he would take the matter into consideration and return an answer to the House.¹ The Parliament continued to urge the immediate execution of the condemned priests. After further delay the king at last replied, 'If you think the execution of these persons so very necessary to the great and pious work of reformation, we refer it wholly to you, declaring hereby that upon such your resolution signified to the ministers of justice our warrant for their reprieve is determined, and the law is to have its course.'² This unexpected answer, by which the king removed the responsibility and odium of their death from himself and laid it upon the Parliament, seems to have disturbed them not a little. From this time we hear no more about the execution of these seven priests, though in the course of the same year no less than eight others were put to death in different parts of the kingdom.

Four of F. Colman's companions were secular priests, and the two others were Benedictines. F. Mabbs, one of the Benedictines, died before the end

¹ Nalson, *Impartial Collections*, vol. ii. pp. 719, 750.

² Clarendon, *Hist.* vol. i. part ii. p. 490, ap. Challoner, vol. ii. p. 97.

of the month of December in which sentence was passed on them; but all the others pined for many years in Newgate till death set them free. F. Wilford died in 1646 at the age of eighty, some say ninety; and F. Turner survived all his companions, thus undergoing the most protracted martyrdom. Nor were these the only priests who thus suffered. In a list of priests who were either executed or died in prison at this time, no less than thirteen who were under sentence of death in 1641 and afterwards died in prison are mentioned.¹

As to F. Colman, he was much more closely confined after his condemnation than he had been before. He appears, too, to have been kept apart from the other Catholics, so many of whom were at this time in Newgate, for nothing was known or could be discovered about him through them. London being in the hands of the Parliament during the civil war, he was cut off from receiving alms from his Catholic friends, who were either in the royal camp, or in prison, or in exile. Consequently he had no food except the scanty prison diet, and he was even sometimes obliged to keep compulsory vigils and fasts. Being destitute of money to bribe the jailers, he was often thrown into the most pestiferous dungeons among the greatest criminals, where he was heavily laden with chains, had no bed except the bare ground, and was constantly exposed to insults and blows. In such hardships he dragged on for three or four years a dying life or living death, till at length, quite exhausted by hunger and thirst and the filth and stench of his dungeon, yet ever firmly professing the same faith which when at liberty he had openly proclaimed, he rendered up his soul to God in such obscurity and isolation that even his brethren could not tell pre-

¹ Dodd, vol. iii. part vi. c. i. book iii. art. vii. p. 173.

cisely when he passed away. It was supposed, however, to have been in 1645.^h

If the question be raised whether he was a martyr, it may be answered, that like S. John the Evangelist he was a martyr in will, and like S. Marcellus, S. Pontianus, and S. Silverius, whom the Church celebrates as martyrs, he sank under his sufferings for the confession of the faith. He voluntarily accepted death, not once only, but constantly for three or four years during each hour of which he expected to be executed. As his sentence had not been revoked the Parliament had the power to hang him at any moment ; therefore, though not hanged in deed he was daily hanged in will, and under these circumstances he expired. Thus, though in due deference to the decision of the Holy See, we may confidently style him a martyr and invoke him as such.

CHAPTER XII.

F. BULLAKER.

WE read in the gospel that S. Peter and S. John ran together to the sepulchre, but though S. John arrived first, S. Peter was the first to enter. Thus was it with F. Colman and his brethren. He arrived first at the threshold of martyrdom, yet while he was kept waiting and was being raised to greater heights of the contemplative life, no less than three of his brothers passed through the gate of death into the joys of Paradise and joined the white-robed army of martyrs.

The first Recollect who followed close in his footsteps was Thomas Bullaker, in religion John Bap-

tist.¹ He was the only son of a physician of good family in Chichester. Both his parents being Catholics he was educated in the faith from his cradle. He early gave signs of his future sanctity and missionary vocation. He was remarkable for modesty, simplicity, and gravity, and by the tenderness of his piety and the fervour of his devotion excited similar affections in those around him. When he was eighteen years of age neither wealth nor worldly honours had the least attraction for him, and even learning he cared for only so far as it could be used for God's glory. His residence in England became from day to day more and more irksome to him. On the one hand he feared lest the purity of his faith and morals should be tarnished by the heretical atmosphere around him, and on the other he could not bear to see the Catholic faith despised, maligned, and trampled under foot. He could say with truth, 'The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up.'² Inflamed with love for the souls of his unhappy countrymen he ardently desired to offer himself a sacrifice, even to death, for their salvation. With this view he resolved to go abroad to study for the priesthood, and when he should be ordained to return to England as a missionary.

Though he was the only child and sole heir of his parents they generously took their part in offering him up to our Lord, and joyfully seconded his piety and zeal. With their blessing he went up to London, where the Spanish ambassador gave him a kind reception, and enabled him under colour of some matter of business to cross to Flanders. He went first to

¹ The life of F. Bullaker is taken from the *Certamen Seraphicum*, with some additions from the MS. of M. De Marsys, a gentleman in the service of the French ambassador, Comte d'Harcourt, who was present at his trial and execution.

² Ps. lxxviii. 10.

the Jesuit College at S. Omer, whence at the end of three weeks he was sent with several other young men to prosecute his higher studies at Valladolid in Spain. But while he was diligently pursuing the usual course of education God called him to a higher state, and filled him with an ardent desire to enter the Seraphic Order of S. Francis. He did not, however, dare to disclose his aspirations to those around him; for not only had he no acquaintance with the Franciscans, so that their Order seemed to be closed to him, but he feared the displeasure of the Jesuit Fathers to whom he had bound himself by vow for the English mission. In his trouble he turned to God and spent days and nights in prayer, tears, and severe penance. His worn and pallid looks soon plainly showed that something was weighing on his mind. At length he told his secret to his confessor, F. Baker, who, much as he would have wished to retain so promising a youth in the Society, at once communicated with the rector of the college. By their direction he made the Spiritual Exercises, and at their close his superiors came to the conclusion that his vocation was from God, and exhorted him to correspond fervently to it.

The Franciscan Province of the Immaculate Conception possessed at about six miles from Valladolid a farm, which was called Abrojo, or 'The Thistle,' from the wild uncultivated land around it. It was well suited to be the site of a House of Recollection of Strict Observance under the title of Our Lady of the Heavenly Ladder, which was famous for its severe discipline and the number of learned and saintly religious whom it had sent forth. Here the Jesuit fathers sought admission for Thomas Bullaker, and here at the age of nineteen he received the habit of S. Francis and the name John Baptist. During the year of his novitiate his exemplary conduct edified

all around him, and at its close he was unanimously elected and made his profession. After some time his superiors sent him to study theology at their convent at Valladolid, whence later at his own wish he was passed on to Avila, and finally to Segovia. In the year 1628, when he was twenty-four years of age, he was ordained priest.

The Catholic Church in India was at this time in a very flourishing state, in great measure through the labours and blood of the Franciscan missionaries. All the Provinces of the Order were bound by statute to send thither such of their subjects as were willing and fitted to carry on the work; but none of them had contributed more missionaries and martyrs than the Spanish Province of the Immaculate Conception. When the usual season for the sailing of the missionaries came round F. John Baptist asked leave of his Provincial to devote himself to the salvation of the heathen. But the Provincial refused his request; for remembering S. Jerome's saying that no one is so impious as not to be surpassed in impiety by heretics, he considered that England, which was overrun with heresy and was F. Bullaker's native land, had a prior claim on him. He therefore tried to persuade him to turn his thoughts towards it. The Provincial's advice rekindled F. Bullaker's youthful love for his country and his ardent desire for its salvation. In order to obtain the gifts of the Holy Spirit and be indued with supernatural strength to gather in a more abundant harvest, he spent ten days in solitude and recollection as a preparation for the work. Then he begged and obtained as an alms a secular dress, in which alone he could venture to be seen in England. Finally, under obedience and with the blessing of the Minister-General, penniless and on foot he set out for Bordeaux. Here he embarked on a ship which conveyed him to Plymouth.

Scarcely had he landed when the captain of the ship took him before a magistrate, and lodged an accusation against him. But he answered so boldly, and yet so prudently, to all the questions that were asked him, that nothing could be proved against him. Notwithstanding, instead of being set at liberty as justice demanded, he was thrown into a noisome prison. His health had suffered from the fatigues of his long journey by land and sea, and he needed rest and comfort. But in this squalid dungeon he had neither bed nor coverlet, but lay on the bare floor, though it was the depth of winter. For eight days he was left without food, and he must have died had it not been for the charity of his Protestant fellow-prisoners, who had learnt compassion from their own sufferings and gave him scraps of the alms that were bestowed upon them. However intolerable others might have deemed his sufferings, yet he accepted them patiently and gladly, rejoicing to suffer for the sweet name of Jesus for love of whom nothing was bitter, nothing hard, and from whose love neither wounds nor sufferings nor death could separate him. For love is an impenetrable breastplate which throws off darts, turns back swords, scorns danger, and laughs at death; so that he who loves always conquers.

At the end of eight days he was removed to the county jail at Exeter. Here he was shut up with murderers, thieves, and the worst malefactors, and had to endure their profligate habits and conversation, the fetid smell from their diseased bodies, and the filth of the place. The only amelioration in his position was that he received alms for his support from the Catholics, of whom, however, there were now but few remaining in Devonshire. Before long two judges came to Exeter on circuit, one of whom tried the civil cases and the other the criminal. Before the latter

F. Bullaker was brought, together with thieves and murderers. After trying in vain to draw from him the confession that he was a priest, the judge asked whether he would take the usual oath of allegiance. He answered, 'I give the king the allegiance that is due to him from a subject. I will obey him in whatever the law commands, and I am ready to confirm this by oath if it be required, and to prove it by my acts should the occasion offer. But as in that oath there are clauses relating to the Pope, Christ's Vicar on earth, which I do not understand, with your permission I refuse to take it.' The judge rejoined that some priests thought it might be taken. F. Bullaker replied, 'There can be no doubt on the subject; and even if there were, it is not permitted to me. So in any case I am resolved never to take it.' The judge then asked, if the king and the Pope were to give him opposite commands, which would he obey. He answered, 'The orders of him who acts according to truth and virtue are to be preferred.' The judge tried to entrap him by captious questions as to which of them he thought would so act. But F. Bullaker perceiving his object followed our Lord's example and was silent. Then was seen the truth of S. Chrysostom's commentary on our Lord's words, "Behold, I send you forth as lambs amongst wolves." As long as we were lambs we conquered, even though a thousand wolves surrounded us; but when we became wolves we were conquered, for then the help of our Shepherd who feeds, not wolves, but lambs, was withdrawn.' The judge who but just before had been raging against him and ready to condemn him to death, as if touched by his humble and patient demeanour and the powerful eloquence of his silence, was suddenly moved in an inscrutable way to make an effort to save him, and said, 'Before next sessions you will have changed your mind, and will humbly

ask time for further consideration.' Whereupon F. Bullaker catching the hint answered, 'I cannot positively say what may hereafter be my decision. Wherefore I humbly beg that my sentence may be deferred till next sessions.' The judge immediately granted his request. But when his accuser, the captain, saw that his victim was about to escape he became very angry, and produced a book which he had found in F. Bullaker's possession and which he declared was a Missal. The book was handed round the court, and turned over and over with exclamations as to its wicked and dangerous character, some declaring it was composed by the Jesuits to detach subjects from obedience to princes, some saying one thing, some another, but all agreeing in abusing it. Thus it passed from hand to hand till it came to a gentleman who understood Spanish, and who proclaimed in a loud voice that it was a book of Spanish plays. Such indeed it was, F. Bullaker having brought it with him as being beyond suspicion, partly to wile away the wearisomeness of his journey, and partly to acquire greater proficiency in the Spanish language. Hereupon a laugh ran through the court to the great confusion of the accuser, while F. Bullaker returned in safety to the prison.

Soon after through the efforts of the Catholics F. Bullaker was summoned to appear within twenty days before the king's council in London. By this stratagem he regained his liberty. Without delay he proceeded to London as quickly as his feeble and suffering state permitted, and joined the fathers of his Order; but his health was so broken by his long journey and his sufferings in prison that he was seized with a violent fever, and during the remaining twelve years of his life he never regained his former health.

F. Bullaker is described as being at this time tall

and graceful, handsome and intelligent, of grave and modest bearing, with a striking resemblance to the pictures of our Lord. For twelve years he toiled fervently in the vineyard to the great edification of his brethren, by whom he was elected successively to the offices of Secretary to the Provincial and Guardian of Chichester. During this time Catholics enjoyed comparative liberty through the influence of the queen, Henrietta Maria. The hope of martyrdom had been F. Bullaker's great inducement for coming to England. Now that there seemed no prospect of this hope being fulfilled he asked and obtained leave to return to Spain. But God disposed otherwise. While he was waiting for an opportunity to quit England the rebellion in Scotland compelled Charles to summon the Parliament in 1640, and the position of Catholics was instantly changed. F. Bullaker's plans underwent a corresponding change, and he firmly resolved that death alone should remove him from his native soil. His resolution was greatly strengthened by a revelation promising him the crown of martyrdom with which he was favoured about this time; and also by the execution of Mr. Ward, whom he looked on as a brother because he wore the cord of S. Francis. Our Lord has said, 'I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love.'¹ As soon then as F. Bullaker heard of Mr. Ward's death he was so drawn by the sweet odour of Jesus, by the myrrh of His Passion and the perfume of His love, that he needed no stimulus to urge him on, but rather fetters to prevent his running too fast.

Immediately bidding farewell to the gentleman in whose house he was living, he hastened up to London, the great mart of martyrs, in order that not by fighting, but by suffering, he might triumph over the

¹ Osee xi. 4.

enemies of the cross of Christ. But on his arrival his friends compelled him reluctantly to retire to some place of safety in the neighbourhood. Soon after F. Colman and his six companions were condemned to death. When this came to F. Bullaker's ears his hope and longing to follow them for love of Him who had died for love of us drove him back again to London. But once more the importunities of his friends compelled him to retire. Before very long the seraphic love which burnt in his heart impelled him to go a third time to London, and not to leave it except at the command of his superiors. It happened that at this juncture the Father Provincial, who at that time was F. George of S. William, came to London, and to him F. Bullaker opened his heart. The Provincial approved of his intention to devote himself to the service of poor Catholics in London, and in order that he might carry out his purpose with greater alacrity and fruit he imposed the task upon him by holy obedience.

Thus strengthened he joyfully set about his work, diligently visiting the prisons, administering the Sacraments whenever it was possible, dispensing consolation and alms, and in every way to the utmost limit of his power helping all who needed his aid. His ardent desire for martyrdom becoming from day to day more intense, he took up his abode in the part of the city where he should have the greatest chance of being captured. But contrary to his expectation his hope was constantly deferred. Pursuivants in search of a priest even came to the house where he was. But when he went boldly up to them and said, 'I am the priest whom you seek,' they would not touch him, even though he added, 'There is no priest here except myself.' On the following day the officers returned. But though his Breviary lay upon the table and they entered the open door of

the room in which he sat at dinner, they went away without arresting him, for his time was not yet come. When he saw them depart he wept, and redoubled his prayers and tears to the Father of mercy and God of all consolation, to grant him to be numbered in the company of martyrs. For 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,' and who freely grants this pre-eminent grace of martyrdom when, how, and to whom He sees fit. How his capture at length came about is told in the following narrative, which he wrote just before his death :

'In the year 1642, on the 11th September, which fell on a Sunday, it pleased the most High and Mighty God to put an end to my sufferings, and give me, His most unworthy servant, the consolation and hope that what I have so long desired and prayed for would shortly come to pass. Blessed be His most holy name to all eternity. After having finished the Divine Office on the morning of this day, in order that I might the better offer the Unbloody Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Eternal Father I recollected myself as was fitting and as best I could. Among the other poor and humble prayers which I addressed to His Divine Majesty I prayed, that of His infinite goodness He would grant me for love of Him to exchange life for death ; and as I knew how unworthy I was, I besought Him earnestly of His overflowing and never-failing goodness to make up for my poverty. After having prayed thus with the greatest fervour that God granted me I rose, and having washed my hands and said the Litany of the Blessed Virgin as usual, I began the Mass. But lo, as I was intoning the "Gloria in Excelsis," the apostate pursuivant Wadsworth came into the room and laid hands on me at the altar. Being thus un-

expectedly, though not unwillingly, made prisoner I wished to take off the sacred vestments. But Wadsworth refused, saying that he would take me in them before the Sheriff of the City. However, when I represented to him that he ought not to do so, not so much on my account as because of the danger to his own life which he might incur, he came round to my opinion and gave me leave to unvest. He also seized all the vestments and paraphernalia, books, rosaries, images, and silver vessels of holy oil, and then took me and the lady in whose house I was a guest before the Sheriff of London.'

M. de Marsys, a gentleman in the household of the Comte d'Harcourt, the French ambassador, tells us that this lady was Margaret Parkins, the wife of Mr. Powell, a Protestant. She was about thirty years of age, and though connected with the principal families of England, was reduced to great poverty by the constant persecutions which she suffered for the cause of God. She had an only son whom she educated with great care in the Catholic faith. She devoted herself to prayer, fasting, and good works, especially to waiting upon priests who were ill in the prisons, gladly shutting herself up with them, and nursing them with such care and liberality that even the most hardened heretics could not but admire her extraordinary virtue. Though her means were small, yet by dint of economy and self-denial she often managed to maintain a priest in her house. One of her servants whom she had tried to convert went to Wadsworth, and asked him what he would give her if she led him to a priest saying Mass in the presence of the lady who sheltered him. After some bargaining five Jacobuses were promised her. On receiving part of the money she took him to a public-house, one of the rooms of which overlooked that which was used as a chapel; and pointing out to him a certain win-

dow, she told him that whenever he should see the curtain drawn he might know that Mass was about to begin. At the appointed signal Wadsworth entered the house with great civility in order to lull suspicion; and then, passing suddenly into the room where Mass was being said, he found F. Bullaker at the altar. On seeing him the holy man only exclaimed, 'O, why did you not wait till the consecration was finished? The precious Body of my Saviour would have strengthened me against your violence, under which my weakness may now succumb.' Mrs. Powell, far from denying her share in the matter, only regretted that she could not alone incur the punishment for both; and without a murmur she gave herself up to Wadsworth, together with her son, a boy of twelve years old, who had been serving the Mass. F. Bullaker's narrative thus proceeds:

'After we had waited half an hour at the sheriff's house the sheriff came in, and walking up to me asked whether I was a priest. I confessed and did not deny that I was. He rejoined, "How did you dare to violate the laws of the kingdom which strictly forbid all such persons to enter it?" I replied, "That because these laws were wicked and contrary to Christian justice, I considered them null and void;" adding, "It appears to me that if you go on in the course that you have begun, before many years there will be a law that no one shall believe in Jesus Christ under pain of treason. I am convinced that you must hate Him greatly, since you cannot bear to behold the statue and image which is a memorial both of His Passion and our redemption. As a proof of this, did you not pull down with blows and shouts the image of Christ Himself on that beautiful cross in Cheapside, which the never-to-be-sufficiently-praised piety of your forefathers had erected at great cost?" Hereupon those who stood round cried out, "In what part of

Scripture did Christ order an image of Himself to be made?" I answered, "Though the precise words do not appear in the sacred page, yet the natural law, to which the divine is never opposed, approves of its being done. The dictates of reason also teach and experience proves that an injury to a statue is done to Him whose Person it represents. To make the thing more clear, if any one insulted, trampled under foot, or broke to pieces the statue of the king, would you not say that he was guilty of treason? And if it be so, ask yourselves, I entreat you, how much greater a crime it must be to injure and abuse the statue of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, the King of kings, as you have lately done." The sheriff then asked why I had come to England. I answered, "To bring my country to the fold of Christ from which it has strayed, and for this purpose I was sent here." He rejoined, "By whom were you sent? Was it by the Pope?" I replied, "By those to whom the Pope had delegated the authority and power to send me." After hearing all that I had said he turned to the pursuivants and left me.

'Their anxiety now was how they should get me away without endangering my life; for a great crowd had assembled and was waiting for me at the door. After long consultation they took me out by the opposite door which opened into another street, and thus they avoided the fury of the mob. They led me to Newgate through the house of the constables who accompanied us, where there was a tavern into which they took me that I might have something to drink. While we were here Wadsworth, who was the chief pursuivant, asked several questions about my name and the country in which I was born, all of which I answered openly; for I was resolved to conceal nothing. He asked what gentlemen of the county of Sussex I had known. I answered that "I had formerly known

two, my fellow-pupils, who had now joined the Parliamentary party, one of whom was Mr. William Morley and the other Mr. William Cawley,¹ both of them gentlemen of good birth." Finally, he asked where I had studied. I answered, "For some time with the Jesuits in Valladolid in Spain; and afterwards, through their kindness, I was received into the monastery of Abrojo, where I was clothed with the habit of the Seraphic S. Francis, and at the end of my novitiate was professed." I told him all this openly, and he reported it to the Parliament.'

De Marsys says the three prisoners were now shut up in three different prisons. F. Bullaker continues :

'The following day, which was Monday, the pursuivants told me that Parliamentary Commissioners, among whom were my two fellow-pupils above named, were appointed to take cognisance of my case. The day after at seven o'clock in the morning the governor of the jail and the pursuivants took me from Newgate to the Parliament, where I found that Wadsworth had spread out on a table all the things that he had taken when he made me prisoner, in order that they might be seen by all who were to examine me. When the Commissioners had looked at them one of them remarked that they were of inferior quality. I answered, "They are at all events much too precious for those who now possess them. I assure you I should have bought much richer ones had I not expected what has come to pass." The president then said, "However inferior these vestments may be, notwithstanding they were used for the most splendid idolatry." I inquired, "What was this idolatry?" He replied, "Is it not idolatry to worship bread for God?" To which I replied, "We never adore bread and wine in the tremendous Sacrifice of the Mass; but we adore our

¹ He was afterwards one of the regicides. Wood, Athen. Oxon. vol. iv. p. 580.

Lord Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine, and offer to Him the worship that is due to Him according to the opinion and practice of the universal Church from the days of the Apostles to those of Martin Luther."

'To this he said nothing. Meanwhile it happened that, in turning over the vestments and other things, one of them discovered an altar-stone; and noticing on it the sign of Christ's cross he looked at it thoughtfully, and at last exclaimed that he had found upon it the mark of the beast. I could scarcely help laughing at the simplicity and gross ignorance of the man. Turning to him I said, "As such intimacy exists between you and the beast, I beg of you to tell me openly and plainly what is his name."

'The president now asked me how I had dared to repudiate and break the laws of the country. I replied, "No other answer suggests itself to me than that which S. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and S. John the Evangelist gave on a similar occasion: 'If it be just in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, judge ye.'"¹ Hereupon Mr. William Cawley, my fellow-pupil, said, "Mr. Bullaker, is it not written, 'Fear God and honour the king'?" I answered, "I know indeed that the same Parliament which made the priesthood treason, established the episcopate, the liturgy, and the ecclesiastical offices and ceremonies which you in the present Parliament have done away with." He replied, "It is allowable for us to amend what was wrongly ordered." I rejoined, "I see clearly that you try to do so. But before very long there will come another parliament, which will abrogate and re-make the religion which you are now attempting to establish." He answered that "I should never live to see that day." I replied, "I know well that the time of my dissolution draws

¹ Acts iv. 19.

nigh. Nevertheless what I have just foretold will come to pass." Hereupon they called me traitor, and declared that it was such as I who had created disturbances in the kingdom. I replied, "Would that there were no other sort of traitors in the kingdom, and no more real and worse dangers to be feared! Numerous as are the calumnies and treasons falsely imputed to Catholics, point out, if you can, one which you can prove against me." They afterwards inquired how old I was and when I had received holy orders. I answered, "There are many orders, of which four are called minor, after which come the subdiaconate, the diaconate, and the priesthood." One of them said, "It is about the last that we are inquiring." Turning to Mr. Cawley, I answered, "This gentleman knows my age perhaps better than I do." He replied, "You are thirty-seven or thirty-eight." I rejoined, "Deduct twenty-four, and the remainder will tell how many years I have been a priest." They inquired how many years I had been in England. I answered, "About twelve." As they perceived that I answered so openly they flattered themselves that I would tell them all that they wished to discover. They therefore asked me how many religious of the Order of S. Francis there were in England. To this I answered, "If you think that you are going to make me a traitor to my brethren, certainly you will never succeed. And though, as you may notice, I am so open in what touches my own cause and do not hold my life more precious than myself, nevertheless in all that might injure others and endanger the lives of my brethren I shall be studiously careful." Hereupon Wadsworth said to them, "My lords, this man is so pertinacious and obstinate that if you send him into exile by one port he will not be ashamed to say that he will return by another." I did not hesitate to confirm that which he had said contemptuously. Among

other questions they asked whether the Bishop of Chalcedon conferred orders in England; to which I answered in the negative. This is the sum of what passed before they decided to send my name and the particulars of my examination up to the Chief Justice. After that the passing of my sentence was deferred, and I was led back to Newgate.

‘When I appeared before the judges at the sessions I signed myself on the forehead, mouth, and chest with the sign of our holy redemption, and said in a loud voice, “By the sign of the cross deliver us from our enemies, O God.” And I humbly prayed for a blessing in the name of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Then the clerk of the sessions, as he is commonly called, bade me hold up my hand according to the custom of the court, and after my accusation had been read he said, “Guilty or not guilty?” I answered, “If by guilty you mean what is hurtful or pernicious or a crime, I certainly deny that I am guilty. But I do not deny that I am a priest.” “Are you not then guilty?” they exclaimed. I answered, “If the words not guilty mean the same as innocent, or not having committed any crime, I say and affirm that I am not guilty. But if by not guilty you wish it to be understood that I deny that I have received the sacred order of the priesthood, that I will never admit, for I openly confess that I am a priest.” They now called me a traitor. I replied, “If there were in the kingdom no other traitors, who indeed fight against and destroy their native land, it would be in better and far happier condition than at present.” When I said this the whole assembly was silent for a short time. After this pause they called me a seducer of the people. On hearing this I said very joyfully, “You fill me with gladness, for you give me the same title which the Jews gave to Christ. Thus our Saviour

was called by the Jews." I added, "In England there have always been priests. The great S. Augustine who baptised this kingdom and taught it to receive the sweet yoke of Christ, was a priest. For this purpose he was sent from Rome by the Pope, S. Gregory the Great. I also am a priest, in every respect the same as S. Augustine." They answered indignantly, "It is no such thing. You came to break our laws and to speak against them; and yet you will not plead guilty." I answered, "I have never done anything against my country or committed any capital crime, and therefore I will never confess myself guilty. Much less will I deny that I am a priest and that I was taken prisoner when I was saying Mass. You will never make me deny this, even were I to go a thousand times to death. Likewise my conscience will never permit me to allow that the priesthood is a crime; for I say that so far from being a crime it ought to be regarded by all with honour and reverence." Hereupon a great outcry was raised, as if I had said that I had never committed a sin. I therefore rejoined, "By your leave, this honourable assembly has not understood me rightly. I confess that I am the greatest sinner upon the face of the earth. But I insist that I am not guilty of any sin or crime in having been raised to the priestly order or in having said Mass. This is what I meant to say." After this the registrar of the court said to me, "Mr. Bullaker, once and again you have confessed and professed yourself to be a priest. But tell us, I entreat you, are you guilty or not guilty?" I answered, "I consider myself free from any capital crime, though I willingly acknowledge myself to be a priest." The registrar replied, "Are you ignorant that the law forbids a priest to remain more than three days in the kingdom without abjuring his priesthood? You have broken this law, and therefore I

accuse you of being a traitor." I rejoined, "The law which is opposed to the law of God ought to be held null. I am indeed anointed a priest of Christ, according to what the prophet-king by divine inspiration foretold of Christ's priests: 'Thou art a priest in eternity according to the order of Melchisedech.' Verily, as you have made the priesthood of Christ the crime of treason it follows according to all sound reasoning, that by assuming that the breach of this law is a crime you have convicted Jesus Christ Himself of treason. Let it be granted for argument's sake, that what is contrary to the law is a sin. The Turks have a law which makes it punishable by death to preach Christ among them. Consequently, according to your argument, those who preach the name of Christ among them are guilty of treason, inasmuch as they act against their laws." The mayor answered, "If it were against the law it would be wicked to try to do it."

The martyr, smiling, replied to this atheistical conclusion, 'You are a good partisan of Mahomet and advocate of the Koran.' At which all present laughed. F. Bullaker continues:

'I subjoined, "If it be so, we are compelled to admit that when the Apostles preached Christ against the edicts and laws of priests and emperors they not only did not act rightly but were guilty of sin, which offends pious ears." Another of the judges replied, "A difference is to be made between the Christian religion and that which is called papistical and Catholic, between promulgating that and this." I said, "In like manner as S. Augustine, the apostle of our nation, brought the former here for its conversion, so I, with exactly the same intention and the same object, have come to convert it to the true faith and unite it to the Catholic Church." They inquired mockingly whether I was S. Augustine. I replied,

“I am a priest of the same order of priesthood as S. Augustine, and I have been sent for the conversion of my country by the same apostolic chair by which he was sent and authorised.” As no further objection occurred to them they laughed, and asked me again whether I was guilty or not guilty. I gave the same answer as before. “If by guilty you mean to convict me of some capital crime, I absolutely deny that I am guilty. But if you refer to what belongs to my priesthood, I assert that I am not guilty in the aforesaid sense that it is a crime. But I will never say that I am not guilty in the sense that I was not ordained a priest. Whether this be a capital crime, Mr. Registrar, and you, my Lord Mayor, I appeal to God, whose countenance beholds justice and who acts as judge between us, and I summon you to His tribunal.” At this both the mayor and the registrar drew back, saying, “We hope we are not going to do anything of which we cannot give an account.” I resumed, “I will not admit that the priesthood is in any way a crime. If to be a priest is the same as to be a traitor, the evident consequence is that all the priests everywhere upon the earth, inasmuch as they are priests, must necessarily be guilty of treason and enemies and betrayers of their country.” They answered, “If they were such against the law.” I replied, “The Parliament which made this law against priests is not infallible, so that it cannot err when it makes laws which require that the universal Church of God, which is the foundation and column of the truth, shall be denied.”

Here the martyr's narrative breaks off. The judges found that they could in no way move him an inch from his glorious confession. For to him our Lord's promise was fulfilled, ‘When you shall be brought before governors and before kings for My sake . . . take no thought how or what to speak . . .

for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay.¹ They therefore removed him from the bar and turned to his fellow-prisoner, Mrs. Powell. They found, however, to their surprise, that they had no better success with her. She answered the threats with which they tried to frighten her by expressing her joy at having an opportunity of sacrificing her life in bearing witness to the faith she had imbibed in her cradle, and her confident hope that God would give her strength to carry it unspotted to her grave. One of the judges, who was a Puritan, exhorted her to think of her soul and her family, and to embrace the religion of the kingdom instead of giving her life for papistical superstitions. But she answered, smiling, that 'as soon as the Parliament should have made choice of a religion they might invite her to receive it; as at the present moment they were disputing on it among themselves, it was ridiculous to make such a proposal to her.' Her eloquence, her modest and courageous bearing, and her presence of mind touched even the Protestants who were present. The judges, therefore, finding that they drew from her only disagreeable truths and repartees which exposed them to the laughter of the bystanders, sent her back to prison. When shortly after she was told that F. Bullaker was condemned to death and that her sentence was deferred to the next sessions, she burst into tears. But quickly recovering, she humbled herself for aspiring to an honour of which she was not worthy, and renewed her offering of herself to God's will for the lengthening of her life in the same spirit of obedience with which she had accepted death.

In the afternoon F. Bullaker was again placed at the bar. The judge once more urged him to acknowledge himself guilty. But he answered, that in the

¹ S. Matt. x. 18, 19; S. Luke xxi. 15.

morning he had proved his innocence, and it was for the judge to acknowledge himself guilty for the iniquitous sentence he was about to pass. He would one day have to give account before the Judge of judges, when every drop of the blood that he was about to shed would rise up against him, and death, far from being to him a passage to glory, as it would be to his present victim, would be an entrance to darkness and punishment which would last to all eternity. The judge answered with an impious smile, 'The punishment matches its duration. But that's a long way off. Meanwhile I will pass upon you a sentence which will send you to pave the place with which you threaten me.' The martyr answered, 'I hope in the mercy of God, and I pray Him to grant a better lot even to my persecutors.'

Then the presiding judge, according to custom, summed up the case to the jury, saying, 'The prisoner is convicted of treason by his own confession. You, therefore, want nothing more. As to the rest, remember that according to your oath and your office you must administer justice rightly in the sight of God.' After some deliberation the jury, in answer to the question whether the prisoner was innocent or guilty, said that according to his own showing he had not incurred any punishment. Notwithstanding, the judge, whose name was Barcklet, immediately passed sentence on him, saying, 'The laws order that you shall be taken back to the place whence you came, and afterwards you shall be drawn on a hurdle to Tyburn, and there hanged, cut down alive, disembowelled, quartered, and beheaded.' On hearing this F. Bullaker, transported with incredible joy and wonderfully fortified in spirit, knelt down and raising his eyes to heaven intoned, 'We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. O Lord, in Thee have I hoped; let me not be con-

founded for ever. I was glad at the things that were said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord.' Then rising he returned the honourable assembly the warmest thanks for the singular favour they had done him. As he was being led back to prison such supernatural joy beamed in his countenance that the surrounding crowd wondered and Catholics were greatly edified.

When it was notified to him that he was to be executed on the following Wednesday he said with a smile to the bearer of the notice, 'I thank you heartily, my friend, for this long-desired and most joyful news. Believe me, were it not for my great poverty I would not send you away empty-handed. But you will not fail to have your reward.' The Catholics, in spite of all obstacles and dangers, flocked in crowds to the prison to see him and ask his blessing and prayers. The Capuchins, who, in accordance with the marriage treaty, had a convent close to the palace, were at this time in great danger of being attacked by the mob. They therefore came to him and commended themselves to his prayers when he should be in God's presence. He promised to remember them; and it was doubtless through his intercession that their lives were spared and they escaped merely with imprisonment. The little time that remained to him after meeting the numerous calls of charity he devoted to holy contemplation and union of his soul with God.

It was noticed that from the moment of his condemnation the sun never shone till, on the morning of that Wednesday, October 12, 1642, it burst forth with extraordinary splendour, as if rejoicing with the heavenly host at the approaching triumph of the martyr. As he was going out of the prison he met F. Bell, who said to him playfully, 'Brother, I was professed before you. Why do you take precedence

of me?' He answered, 'It is the will of God. But you will follow me.' He was then placed on the hurdle on his back with his face upwards, and was drawn over the stones and rough streets with no little pain and suffering. Notwithstanding, all who beheld him were struck with the sweet serenity of his countenance, as if he were hastening to a wedding, as indeed he was; for he was going to the celestial palace in a procession of innumerable angels to enter the marriage-bed of the beloved and eternal Spouse. When he arrived at the place of execution, bruised and weakened by his long and painful journey, he beheld the scaffold erected for thieves and murderers, but now adorned with the blood of numerous martyrs. The frightful preparations for his torture, far from striking him with fear and horror, filled him with joy and consolation; for he was ready to encounter a thousand deaths rather than betray the least point of the faith or resign the privilege of shedding his blood for Christ. When the sheriff, according to custom, asked him whether he had anything to say, he answered, that he wished only to acknowledge his obligations to him and to his country for the great and unexpected favour that was granted him. The Protestant ministers who stood round asked to what favour he referred. He answered, 'The favour of which I judged myself unworthy, for which I always longed, but never dared to hope, namely, to shed my blood for the Catholic Apostolic Roman faith.' Then turning to the crowd, he took for his subject the words of the Psalmist, 'Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech.' But his voice was so weakened by the vigils and exertions of the last three days, and there was such a noise and rushing of the people who had gathered in great crowds, that he could be heard only by those who were quite close to him. When he began to speak

of the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament a Protestant minister interrupted him, saying that he must not seduce the people with his corrupt doctrine. F. Bullaker, turning to him sweetly and gently, answered, 'As a favour grant me liberty to speak for only one short hour. You, indeed, are the minister of the King of England, but I, a priest though unworthy, am the legate of the King of Heaven, and I have never had a more august pulpit than this. You leave no stone unturned to destroy this crowd, blinding them in the darkness of ignorance and driving them forward in error. Grant me, then, this little favour, that at least from the scaffold I may extend to it a helping hand and my tongue may be to it a plank from rocks and shipwreck.' Thus his zeal and fervour carried him on till the appointed hour arrived, when the officers, who had with difficulty borne with him, cut short his words. Then he raised his hands for a short time while torrents of tears ran down his cheeks, and at this signal one of his brethren who for this purpose had mingled in the crowd, gave him absolution. Commending himself again and again to God's mercy, and looking round with a beaming countenance as if he were in an ecstasy of joy, he was suddenly thrown from the ladder, and while he yet breathed the usual barbarous tortures were inflicted on him, and his heart, still palpitating, was shown to the crowd with the words of insulting triumph, 'Behold the heart of a traitor.' It was then thrown into the fire. But the aforesaid father of his Order, at great risk snatched it and some of the intestines from the flames. His head was finally placed on a pole on London Bridge and his quarters on four gates of the City. But that most holy soul, released from the broken walls of its narrow prison and escorted by saints and angels, mounted to heaven, where, adorned in token of his victory with the martyr's triumphal palm,

he abides to all eternity in peace, joy, and unfading glory.

The servants of Count Egmont, who was present, collected as relics a small piece of his heart, some pieces of his bones and flesh, his liver, his diaphragm, part of his præcordia, two fingers, some hair, four towels dipped in his blood, the rope with which he was hanged, the straw on which he was laid to be disembowelled, and some paper greased with his fat. The Count certified the genuineness of these relics, which were either snatched out of the fire or bought from the executioner at the time of the martyrdom by his command and in his sight. His formal certificate of authentication is now in the archives of Lille.¹

CHAPTER XIII.

F. HEATH.

THE same wonderful union of uniformity with variety which is found in all God's works, whether of nature or of grace, appears in a striking degree in the five Recollects of the new Province who were martyred about this time. All were true sons of S. Francis. All walked more and more closely from day to day in the footsteps of Jesus crucified; and all panted to be united to Him in that love, than which none is greater, that a man lay down his life for his friend. Yet each found those footsteps in a separate

¹ Rambler, new series, vol. viii. p. 119. Mrs. Stanley Cary of Follaton, Devon, has a piece of linen dipped in F. Bullaker's blood. The nuns of the convent of our Lady of Dolours at Taunton, who, it will be remembered, are the community established at Brussels, have a bone of one of F. Bullaker's arms, a corporal dipped in his blood, and the corporal he was using at the Mass which he had begun when he was arrested.

path, and each had his own peculiar characteristics. We have seen how F. Colman's life was, in a peculiar sense, a hidden one. Exteriorly he seemed to be little more than a pious Catholic layman of high education, refined tastes, and polished manners. But interiorly he was the steward in charge of his Lord's house, diligently ministering spiritual food to the servants committed to his charge, ever on the watch for his Lord's coming to open instantly to Him when He should knock, and at last perfected through the long vigil of years of a living death. We have also seen how F. Bullaker had a decided missionary vocation. It had shown itself when, as a child, he had unconsciously infused his own pious affections into those around him. It had driven him from home to fit himself for the quest of souls. It had impelled him to go forth to heathen lands, and had at length drawn him back again to his home to give his life for his fellow-countrymen. F. Henry Heath, in religion Paul of S. Magdalen, to whom fell the next martyr's crown, differed totally from both F. Colman and F. Bullaker. He had not imbibed the faith from his parents in earliest infancy, but had attained to it only through the toil and pain of conversion in manhood. He had not the least attraction to missionary work and he never joined the mission. On the contrary, his life as a Catholic was spent in the calm of the school and the cloister, in constant supernatural union with God, and he came to England for the sole object of perfecting that union through martyrdom.

F. Heath¹ was born in 1600 at Peterborough in Northamptonshire, and was educated at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Even as a Protestant he followed out the life of a religious in a remarkable way. During five years that he was at college he got up

¹ The life of F. Heath is chiefly taken from the *Certamen Seraphicum*.

every morning both in summer and winter at two o'clock and began to read ; and if any of his fellow-students wished to rise at three or four, he gladly called them, and by his example encouraged them to study. His reading gradually led him to see that Protestantism does not rest on a solid basis, and he therefore resolved to inquire into the Catholic faith. About the same time he was elected librarian of his college, and in this office he had full command of books. He first took in hand the controversy between Cardinal Bellarmine and Dr. Whitaker ; and in order to judge the better between them he devoted himself to the study of the Fathers. Before long he noticed the correctness and fairness of Bellarmine's quotations and the fraudulent character of Whitaker's. This naturally drew him to the Catholic faith. He was joined in these studies by four of his fellow-students, all of whom became Catholics before him, and all afterwards entered religion, three as Franciscans, and the fourth as a Jesuit. Already he was animated by the apostolic spirit, and he so openly and successfully exposed the errors of Protestantism and set forth the true faith, that the heads of his college determined to imprison him or expel him ignominiously. On hearing of their intention he fled to London. He went first to the Spanish ambassador, whose house was an asylum for all poor Catholics ; but most unexpectedly he was refused assistance. He then applied to Mr. George Jerningham, a well-known Catholic ; but he, taking him for a spy, sent him away with bitter reproaches. Thus destitute of friends and repulsed on all sides, he bethought him in his extremity of the devotion of Catholics to our Blessed Lady, in whom he had hitherto had but little faith. Hoping to obtain through the merits of the Immaculate Mother of God favours of which he was himself unworthy, he earnestly besought her, as the true help

of Christians and consoler of the afflicted, to take pity on him, vowing in return to devote himself to her service. Immediately after he met Mr. Jerningham, who, to his surprise, accosted him very kindly. After hearing his history Mr. Jerningham took him to the Rev. George Muscott, who heard his confession and reconciled him to the Church.

Who, then, will not turn in trouble to the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin? Who will not confess the truth and wisdom of S. Bernard's advice?—'In perils, in difficulties, in doubts, think of Mary, invoke Mary; let her not depart from thy mouth, let her not withdraw from thy heart; and as thou askest her prayers, fail not to follow her example. Following her, thou wilt not go astray; praying to her, thou wilt not despair; thinking of her, thou wilt not err; supported by her, thou wilt not slip; protected by her, thou wilt not fear; led by her, thou wilt not weary; favoured by her, thou wilt succeed.'¹ Thus, through the favour and help of the Blessed Virgin, Henry Heath reached his longed-for resting-place.

Mr. Jerningham and Mr. Muscott now introduced him to the Spanish ambassador, who found means to send him out of England. They also gave him letters of recommendation to Dr. Kellison, Rector of the English College at Douai, who received him kindly and admitted him as a pupil. Two of the English Recollects lately established at Douai happening to come to the college, he was very much struck with their mode of life, and began to reason thus within himself: 'Are not these friars true imitators and perfect disciples of Christ, obeying literally His command, "Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses; nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes"?² Is not this the model of the apostolic life—"Behold, we have left all and followed Thee"—to

¹ Homil. i. Missus est.

² S. Matt. x. 9.

which Christ promised the reward, "You will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"? Is not this the life so highly praised by the Fathers as the flower and elect part of the Church, as the life of angels on earth, of Christ's imitators, and of the most illustrious portion of his flock? Why do I delay to leave all and follow their example? Is not this life well suited to me? What can I find more useful, more fitting, and more noble than to imitate Christ, who was born, lived, and died in poverty, humility, and austerity? I am therefore resolved to bear the cross of penance and mortification with my Jesus and to renounce the passing things of this world, that I may be the perfect disciple of Christ.'

These thoughts took so strong a hold on him that he revealed them to his confessor, who at first discouraged him, on the ground that being a convert that kind of life would be too difficult for him. But when the confessor perceived how firm was F. Heath's resolution he consulted the rector and council of the college, and after due deliberation they decided to apply at once on his behalf to F. Jackson, then Guardian of the convent of S. Bonaventure.

With the permission of F. Genings Henry Heath received in 1624 the habit of S. Francis and the name Paul of S. Magdalen. It is impossible to describe how holy was the life that he led even during his novitiate. None surpassed him in contempt of the world, in mortification of the flesh and self-will, in prayer, and in love of God. His fervour led him to endeavour constantly to follow literally the example of S. Francis. On the one hand, he combated sloth by remembering S. Gregory's warning, 'Not to advance is to fall back;' and on the other, he kept himself humble by frequently adopting the words of his seraphic father, 'Now, brothers, let us begin.' So penetrated was he with the love of God that neither

in his thoughts, words, nor actions would he admit aught that did not tend to God. Even during recreation, if the conversation turned on his country, relatives, and friends, he took no interest in it; for his heart and thoughts were ever in heaven and he had perfectly cast off the old man and clothed himself with the new. He was so deeply impressed by the sense of his own unworthiness, and so closely united to God by the bond of love, that he could truly say with the Apostle, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'

At the end of a year he was professed. He was now set to study theology under F. Francis à Sta. Clara. With characteristic simplicity he directed his studies solely to the promotion of the love of God in himself and his neighbour. His fine natural gifts were more fully drawn out by the supernatural motive which animated him, and he soon attained remarkable proficiency in every branch of theology. All the papers on moral theology, cases of conscience, and other theological subjects which he left behind him were pronounced to be faultless; and Dr. Poletius, the distinguished Regius Professor in the University of Douai, after hearing his public disputations in divinity, declared, 'To speak candidly, I never heard any one more learned than he.'

He was first elected Vicar of the College, to which office were united those of Master of the Scholastics and Lecturer on Moral Theology. Afterwards he became Lecturer on Scholastic Theology, and finally he rose to the highest theological chair. He several times held the office of Guardian, and he was also successively elected Custos of the English Province and Vice-Provincial. But so great was his humility that he accepted these offices only under obedience, and while he held them he always kept in mind our Lord's words, 'He that is greatest among you let him be your servant.' The humility, obedience, recollec-

tion, and tranquillity of soul with which he always bore the burden of office were so perfect that the last three years of his life, during which he was Guardian, were evidently a preparation for the glorious death with which he was crowned at their close. The high estimation in which he was held by his brethren is expressed in the following eulogium, pronounced upon him after his death by F. Marchant, Commissary-General of the German, English, and Belgian Provinces: 'This man was in his lifetime of lamb-like meekness, a mirror of piety, a pattern of religious observance among his brethren, a great light of theological learning in the College of Douai, a star which threw out not only light but heat.'

Amid his studies and the pressing duties of office he never remitted his works of charity. He devoted many hours, and sometimes even days, to visiting the sick and poor, instructing the ignorant, consoling the afflicted, and seeking the salvation of souls. His seraphic charity shone most brightly when he fell in with heretics. He would leave whatever he was doing, and even his meals, to help them. On their behalf he would continue for hours in prayer and fasting, expose himself to intense cold in winter, and perform extra penances, never resting till he had brought the erring sheep back to the fold of the Church. Thus he generated many sons to Christ, not only by his words, but still more by the irresistible force of his ardent love.

He never missed regular attendance in choir whether by day or night, or any of his community duties, unless he was forced by illness to do so. He was never known to cease from prayer except to read or for some work of charity, or to leave his work and reading except for prayer. All his actions were consecrated to God by being begun, continued, and finished by prayer. In fact he followed literally our Lord's

command to pray always, giving to prayer every moment which was not otherwise occupied, and praying with sighs, tears, and extraordinary fervour, whether in the church, in his cell, in his walks and journeys, at table, or in bed. The fruit of this constant prayer was a meek and gentle spirit, great tranquillity, peace, sweetness, and spiritual joy.

His rule obliged him to go on foot, and always without shoes, purse, or money, to sleep on straw without a pillow, to rise at midnight, to take the discipline three times a week, to eat and drink at all times very sparingly, and in addition to the fasts of the Church to fast from All Saints till Christmas, for forty days after Epiphany, from Ascension to Pentecost, in fact, for more than half the year. But to this severe rule he voluntarily added many austerities. For many years he took only a small quantity of bread and ale on four or five days of the week. He slept on the bare ground, wore a hair shirt and an iron chain round his waist, frequently took disciplines even to blood, and performed many other private penances. Also, after matins and the usual meditations in choir he continued in prayer through the greater part of the night. But his penitential practices, far from weakening him, seemed to give him strength. Perfect mortification was seen in his every look and act. Obedience was no difficulty to him. Poverty was so pleasing to him that he always tried to have the poorest clothes, the smallest cell, and nothing which was not indispensably necessary. While his own life was so very austere his treatment of others, especially when he was in office, was gentle, considerate, and unassuming.

The cross has in all ages been the royal banner of the Christian. It was prefigured in the attitude of Moses when his outstretched arms were supported by Aaron and Hur; and by David when he said, 'In

Thy name will I lift up my hands.'¹ In the Mass the priest, after the consecration, proclaims by it the identity of his sacrifice with that which Christ offered on Calvary; and it has always been extolled by the Church in the same proportion as it has been feared by devils. But to the Friar Minor it is especially dear. It reminds him that when S. Francis was clothed by his Bishop with the mantle of poverty, he took up a stone and signed himself with the cross from head to foot, as if in prophetic anticipation of the extraordinary grace by which he was afterwards transformed into the living image of Jesus crucified. Hence the habit of praying with the arms stretched out in the form of the cross has always been the favourite devotion of the Friars Minor. It was one of the means by which F. Heath prepared himself to shed his blood for the Crucified. He obtained through it many favours, one of which he often mentioned. It happened that some contagious disorder had attacked the community. Several of the friars had died, many others were dangerously ill, and the first symptoms had appeared in himself. He at once sought help in this devotion, and stretching out his arms in the form of a cross he for half an hour commended himself with great fervour to Jesus crucified. At length, quite exhausted by the tension of mind and body he was forced to drop his arms. But at the same moment he was restored to health.

He who loves our Lord must also love His Mother. F. Heath had a singular devotion to our Blessed Lady from the time that the difficulties attending his conversion were removed by her help till he drew his last breath. The invocation of her name inspired him with confidence. In all his trials and undertakings he humbly sought her as his patroness and Mother of Mercy. Her name was always in his

¹ Ps. lxii.

heart and on his lips, and he often fasted and did other pious acts as her devoted servant and son. He especially ascribed to her intercession the great favour that was granted him in the conversion of his father, who, when nearly eighty years of age, left England and was reconciled to the Church at S. Bonaventure's convent, in which he afterwards took the habit as a lay-brother.

We are so fortunate as to possess several of F. Heath's writings, which give us a clear insight into his saintly soul. He wrote a small book called *Soliloquies, or Documents of Christian Perfection*, which is a useful guide to the spiritual life.¹ In the same volume is a collection of 'Pious Similes,' which are quaint and very instructive. In his life, which serves as a preface, are given the private exercises by which he supplemented his religious rule with a view to greater strictness of observance and more perfect mortification. The following summary at their close shows their spirit :

'Always to help in good works of charity without levity or loss of time ; doing all things in obedience, and particularly using these three rules : 1. Renouncing all right and authority in everything whatsoever, even in my good name and personal convenience, that I may willingly suffer myself to be despoiled of all things for God's sake. 2. Offering myself as a servant to every creature, that I may do him all possible good, expecting no profit thereby, but only crosses and afflictions. 3. To live as absolutely dead to the defects of others, in order that I may continually lament my own defects.'

The following, which he calls 'An Exercise,' that

¹ This book was printed at Douai in 1674, and was translated into several languages. It had become scarce, and being highly prized, it was reprinted by Dolman in 1844.

I intend always to observe,' also throws light on his habitual union with our Lord :

'Whereas I have learnt by certain experience that all human consolation is subject to vanity, therefore I determine to have alone most sweet Jesus in my mind, and in all things to meditate on His sweetness. O, how sweet is Jesus, my Beloved, who for me, so vile a worm, hath suffered so many things, and of such a sort! Sweet house, in which sweet Jesus doth vouchsafe to dwell with me! Sweet cell, in which I may always contemplate sweet Jesus! Sweet drink, sweet bread, which most sweet Jesus hath provided for my refreshment! Sweet brothers, who have given yourselves so absolutely up to the service and love of sweet Jesus! Sweet consolation, sweet discourse, by which sweet Jesus doth ease my afflictions! Sweet abjection, sweet mortification, by which I may suffer something for sweet Jesus! Sweet affliction, sweet pain, sweet chastisement, by which I am forced to call for the help of sweet Jesus! O, how sweet are all the creatures who so exceedingly extol the wisdom and power of my most sweet Jesus! Whatsoever, therefore, Jesus shall please to lay upon me, I do most firmly resolve for His love patiently to undergo; nor will I admit any other thing into my soul, through all my labours and tribulations, than that sweet word; willingly, willingly, Thy will be always done, Lord Jesus. Amen.'

F. Heath was extraordinary confessor to S. Elizabeth's community at Nieuport. He appears also to have been confessor to the community at Aire. He wrote the following letter to one of the nuns of the latter who was dying :

'My dearest Child,—This day I understood of thy great weakness by the rev. mother's letter, where-

upon I could not but write to thee, being it may be the last time that I shall ever write or speak any more unto thee in this life; and this I now do, more for mine own benefit and commodity (hoping that thou wilt be ever mindful of me when thou comest to thy eternal rest) than for any necessity of thy part, who hast so long bethought thyself heretofore concerning this time. And I know thy own conscience doth sweetly recount to thee the former passages of thy life;—with what zeal, with what contentedness, thou first didst leave the world, thy natural parents and dearest friends, purely and simply to come to Jesus; and that, not for His comfort and pleasures, for honour and other temporal favours, which He often heapeth upon those that serve Him, but to make thyself His servant, His slave, His vassal,—to give thy body and soul wholly unto Him, to be wholly His, as a servant or slave is wholly in his master's hands to strike him or beat him, to send him or call him, when or whithersoever he pleaseth. I know thou canst not but remember those sweet meetings, those loving silent night-discourses, which in thy strength and weakness, thou hast heretofore enjoyed with thy beloved Jesus, when He has asked thee sweetly, as He did S. Peter, “Dost thou love Me?” And thou hast answered Him again, “O, my dearest Master, this is all my sorrow, this is all my grief, that desiring with all my heart to love Thee, I cannot love Thee so perfectly, so steadfastly, so entirely, as I desire to love Thee.”

‘The very house and walls of thy enclosure cannot but put thee in mind where and how thou hast lived these many years, as if thou hadst been thus long already dead and buried in thy habit from the world. How sweetly now canst thou say to thyself, “O happy time, O blessed years, that I have now passed in my Redeemer’s service! O blessed prison!

O happy chains and bonds of my vows, which I have borne for sweet Jesus ! Here I have daily carried my cross, which has taught me the way of true humility and patience. Here have I been broken of my own proper will and judgment, which would have hindered me from being wholly resigned and obedient to the will of God. Here have I been trained up in virtue, in the fear of God, in the way to heaven. Here I sweetly sing the praises of my Redeemer. Here have I followed Him from the garden to the judgment-seat of Annas and Caiphas, from Pilate to Herod, from Herod to Pilate, from Pilate to the Cross. Here have I bewailed my infirmities, confounded myself in acknowledging my human frailties. Here have I fought against my appetite, subdued my passions, vanquished my inclinations. Here have I spent many a groan to come to Jesus when He has hid Himself from me. And now my whole pilgrimage is to be ended ! Now I go to my sweet Beloved, whom I shall evermore enjoy, and never more be separated from Him, nor evermore be troubled with sin, nor with the temptation to sin." These things and the like I know are familiar with thee, and therefore I need say nothing to comfort or encourage thee in this thy last combat.

‘Concerning thy confessions, I will not have thee trouble thyself with those things of which thou hast formerly spoken to me, for they are mere vanities and fancies and of no moment ; therefore contemn them, and die confidently, and I will answer for them. I am sorry it falls out so that my present employments will not permit me to see thee at this present. Yet if there be a necessity of my coming, send word presently, and nothing shall detain me, God willing. And if thou departest without me in body, yet thou shalt not go without me in heart and soul. For I have always, since I knew thee, found

an interior particular propensity and inclination of my very heart towards thee, for the wonderful good example of virtue and sanctity which thou hast given me. And I bless God with all my heart that He has made me acquainted with the examples of thee and others in that blessed community, that I might learn how to frame my life in this my frail and tedious pilgrimage, that I may at last come whither thou art going. And therefore I do earnestly commend my poor soul unto thee when thou art with blessed Jesus, not doubting but He^d will mercifully assist me and help me at thine intercession for me. Sweet Jesus keep thee and conduct thee to His eternal happiness! And I shall ever pray for thee.

‘Thy poor unworthy brother,

‘BROTHER PAUL MAGDALEN HEATH.

‘Sept. 3d, 1637.’

Only one more grace was wanting to perfect this saintly soul. When he had been nineteen years at Douai this also was granted him. At an earlier period the Provincial had proposed to him to go to England. But from humility and love of holy solitude and mortification, he had so earnestly entreated on his knees to be excused that he had been allowed to remain at Douai. No sooner, however, had the persecution in England broken out afresh than the martyr spirit which had driven S. Francis to preach to the Soldan, and which, like an aureola, crowns his whole Order, burst forth in F. Heath. When he heard of the martyrdom of several priests in London, and of the sentence passed on F. Colman and his six companions, he wrote the following letter, in which, on account of the troubled times, he did not adopt the form of address usual among the members of his Order:

‘ To his incomparably honoured and infinitely beloved friends, Mr. Colman and his companions, health,

‘ O most glorious men, most noble friends, and most courageous soldiers of Jesus Christ! Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, your souls are the celestial Paradise, your blood is more precious than all the morning and evening sacrifices of Aaron and all his sons. Alas, how great is my unhappiness that I am not permitted to come to you, that I might be partaker of your chains and offer myself to be consumed with that ardent love of Jesus Christ which in your trials has made you so constant, so victorious over human threats, so shining with all gems of virtue that Solomon in all his splendour was not so glorious as you. O good Jesus, what crime have I committed that I am not to be permitted to enjoy your company? For there is nothing in this world I more desire, nor is it possible that anything can satisfy me so long as I am apart from you. Wherefore I humbly beseech you for the love of God to pray for me, that I may come to you and never be separated from you.

‘ Your unworthy servant,

‘ PAUL MAGDALEN.’

He also wrote to his Provincial, F. George of S. William, who was then in England :

‘ To the most honoured Mr. George, &c.

‘ Sir,—Ever since I heard of the zeal and fervour of the most blessed men who not long since went forth from us and are now detained in prison, the greatest sorrow has stirred my soul that I am deprived of that happiness and am not allowed to go to them. When I consider their unconquerable fortitude amid crosses and sufferings, and behold them so constant in the faith of Christ, so reckless of flesh and blood, so

inflamed with Divine love, I am overwhelmed with shame that while they, like courageous soldiers, fight boldly under the banner of Christ, I remain at home in idleness and peace. O thrice-blessed martyrs, your crosses and sufferings are more brilliant and precious than the gems and pearls of royal and princely diadems! Your blood boils in me scarcely less than it does in your own bodies. Your glorious hanging, the painful contortion of your nerves, the deadly cutting of your flesh, plainly manifest that celestial ointment which was created in the deepest recesses of your heart, that fragrant ointment I mean which is infinitely more fragrant than that of the blessed Magdalen and preferable to that which was poured on the head of Aaron. Alas, my dearest sir, I await only a command from you; nothing else detains me. Should I receive but one word of consent from you I will not allow myself to be kept away from you for a single moment. This my petition is not new or unheard of, or aught else than what stones and plants and other inanimate things by a natural inclination covet and pursue; for verily all things naturally of their own accord tend towards the centre and end for which they were created. I cannot believe that you deem him a brave and magnanimous soldier who, when he hears that the army of his general is in the field and that his fellow-soldiers are called to battle by trumpets and drums, yet indulges in base sloth in his paternal home. I confess that I am indeed unfit and totally unworthy to exercise the Apostolic Office or to receive reproaches and insults for the name of Jesus. But strength is made perfect in weakness, and God chooses the foolish to confound the wise. Moreover, I am convinced that the same obligation is laid upon me as upon others to serve Jesus Christ, nor certainly am I less bound than they to suffer for Him. May our most benignant Lord

inspire you to hasten your consent, and I shall remain
to all eternity

Your poor son,
'P. M.'

The Provincial answered that he rejoiced at his holy zeal, but he would have him consider what a loss he would be to the Province, to which he was now very useful, because there was a great scarcity of Superiors and Lecturers for the Convent of Douai; notwithstanding, at the fitting time he would summon him to England. This answer, far from allaying F. Heath's insatiable thirst and longing, only excited it the more. At length, wearied out by long delay, he spoke to the Commissary or Vice-Provincial in Belgium, who happened to be F. Angelus of S. Francis Mason, afterwards his biographer. On his knees and with floods of tears, he said to him, 'Father, send me thither. I suffer so much from anxiety and weariness that I have lost my usual peace of mind, and I lie awake at night, constantly seeing the executioner tying the cord round my neck.' As he spoke it seemed as if he actually stood on the scaffold which awaited him. But for the reasons above mentioned his petition could not be granted. He then besought and obtained leave to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of our Lady at Monte Acuto in Brabant.

Before his departure he wrote a prayer or letter, as he called it, to the Blessed Virgin. It is, unhappily, too long to be given at full length, but a few extracts will show its style and the spirit in which he wrote:

'Blessed Mother of God and Virgin, beloved Daughter of the Eternal Trinity, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, special Patroness of the Catholic Church, Mother of orphans, Advocate of sinners, most faithful Consoler of the desolate and afflicted, Blessed Mother and Lady, to whom, after God, I owe, not only what

I am, but ten thousand times more than I can conceive. Thou knowest what in early times was the intercourse between me and thee, my sleepless nights, my painful struggles, my sighs, my groans, alike of joy and sorrow: of joy, because I possessed thee wholly as my Mother of hope; of sorrow, because I was so unworthy to converse with such a queen. O Mary! who can be found capable of celebrating the excellence of thy merits, thy boundless benignity, and our daily faults; thy constant help, and our many temptations; thy most powerful aid, and the instability of our intentions; thy innumerable incentives to good, and our propensity to evil; thy invitations to virtue, our torpidity towards thee, and the ardent inextinguishable flames of thy charity towards us? O Blessed and ever most Blessed Mother! my sole consolation in this sorrowful pilgrimage on earth is that Jesus Christ is thy only Son, and that through thy gracious intercession He does not reject me. My highest perfection is to try and imitate thy singular humility and obedience and to make myself in all things the servant of God's good pleasure and commands. All my studies and knowledge tend to this, that I may understand at least some small portion of those mysteries which were infinitely consummated in thee: how God, the Author and Beginning of all things, indivisible in essence, received from thee a Son coeval and coequal with Himself in majesty, distinct in person, but undivided in the participation of substance and glory; how the same Person, who from all eternity claimed by right the Divine nature, laying aside His royal sceptre and power became a weak infant, deriving flesh from thy flesh, fed by the nourishment that flowed from thy breasts, pressed in thine embrace and warmed in thy bosom, but far more happily and deeply cherished by thee in the tenderest affections of thy maternal love.'

After showing that her virtues and knowledge cast into the shade those of all the fathers, doctors, and saints of the Church, and that their highest ambition was to receive her as their Advocate, Lady, and Mother, he proceeds :

‘O Blessed Virgin, what tongue can describe thy innumerable gifts? Who can worthily celebrate thy praise? What did prophets foretell, apostles preach, fathers defend, and doctors declare, except simple faith in Him who was conceived by thee, born of thee, fed and nourished by thee? My only ambition in this life is to be subject to thee as thy most vile and obedient slave. Called by thee, I run quickly; dismissed, I retire; at thy command I remain. When for the punishment of my sins thou art pleased to withdraw thy accustomed consolation and to chastise me with temporal affliction, I wait patiently. Come what may in this fluctuating and finite world, dead or alive, submerged and shipwrecked or standing on dry ground, in prosperity or adversity, in sweetness or bitterness, in joy or sorrow, all is pleasing to me so long as I have access to thee, and by thee may follow Jesus, to whom, like the prodigal son, I desire to return, upheld by the hope that, notwithstanding my numerous past sins, He will through thy most benign intercession receive me as my most tender and indulgent Father and my most gentle and loving Redeemer.’

He then reminds her of her marvellous goodness in the circumstances of his own conversion and that of his father; and also how, when he held the office of Guardian, the whole community was in the greatest destitution, many of the brothers dying and no one but herself to whom he could have recourse, she had moved the city to take compassion on them, to give them leave to beg from door to door, and liberally to relieve their wants. He recalls how, at his en-

trance into religion, she had taught him humility and self-denial by inebriating him with her sweetness, had removed the thick clouds of his ignorance by the splendour of her light, and had imparted the sweet flavour of honey to the bitter myrrh of her Son's Passion ; and how, in succeeding years up to the present time, she had supported him amid the anxieties and vexations with which his path was strewn, the heavy burden of governing others, and the constant vicissitudes of his own life. After deploring his own unworthiness he thus concludes :

‘O most Blessed Virgin, as from the first moment of my conversion, so now my last will and testament is, that I assign my soul to sweetest Jesus and to thee, that thou mayst claim full possession, authority, and dominion over it ; and I leave and abandon my body to be tried and tested by all sorts of torments and sufferings, that it may thereby be exercised from day to day in humility and self-abnegation, and may advance quickly in the path of all the virtues which thy blessed steps have trod. This my last petition and the summit of all my wishes, is, that after such immense and innumerable favours thou wilt add yet one more, and obtain for me fortitude and constancy to press forward in the footsteps of thy faithful and victorious servants who have gone before me. Then, if it be granted me, thou wilt see with what willingness and alacrity I shall give my bare back to be placed upon burning coals, with what joy I shall drink the most bitter chalice, with what glad and eager gaze I shall look on that much desired knife even while it transfixes me, that knife which will deliver me from this wearisome and miserable prison, and introduce me to the longed-for presence of thy dearest Son Jesus, where in company with thee I shall dwell for ever. Amen. Quick, quick, quick !’

After finishing this prayer F. Heath set out for Monte Acuto. On his way he passed through Ghent, where he found F. Peter Marchant, Commissary-General of the district, and humbly laid his petition before him. F. Marchant afterwards wrote:

‘Having been for some months inebriated in spirit he came to our presence to ask leave, according to the rule, to go to the English wanderers from the faith, assigning no other reason than that he wished to shed his blood and die with his spiritual brethren, and for his English brothers according to the flesh. I opposed him. I tried his spirit. But as it was rushing with great impetuosity I gave him an obedience that he should conform his will to that of his immediate Superior.’

This immediate Superior, unhappily, was F. Angelus of S. Francis, who had already refused his request, and thus his cause seemed hopeless. Nevertheless, he continued his pilgrimage to our Lady’s shrine. Lo! on his return F. Angelus, as he himself tells us, after commending the matter to God found himself compelled by, he knew not what secret force, to give his consent. Thus this last favour was added in so marvellous a way to the many others which he had before received through the intercession of our Blessed Lady.

From this time till he drew his last breath F. Heath’s whole appearance was so changed that he seemed to be another man. Celestial light shone in his eyes, angelic beauty beamed in his face, supernatural grace and joy appeared in his words, acts, and gestures, especially when he was saying Mass, and he constantly spoke with incredible feeling of the glory of the martyrs, as if he had already a foretaste of it. When his Superiors, according to custom on similar occasions, wished to provide him with a secular dress, and gave him leave to possess money, he insisted on

continuing to be the poor servant of Christ and to throw all his care upon God. He had such an affection for his religious habit that he kissed it with fervour; and being unwilling to part with it, he himself sewed and altered it so as to give it a secular form like a sailor's dress. On his arrival at Dunkirk, where his brethren received him most hospitably, the Guardian, in accordance with directions that he had received, offered him suitable clothes, but he absolutely refused to accept them. On board the ship which took him to England he fell in with a German nobleman, who wished not only to bear the expenses of his journey but to keep him in his house in London. Preferring, however, to imitate the poverty of his Seraphic Father, he rejected everything except the payment of his passage to the captain; and on foot, begging his food, but refusing money, which the Protestants kindly offered him, he made his way to London.

Though F. Heath had now been a Recollect for nineteen years, yet he had hitherto practised poverty only in its mildest form, secluded in his convent, or begging from door to door in a Catholic country where his habit secured him charity and respect. But now he had entered on a far harder course. In England poverty was a disgrace, and his habit and priesthood were a deadly crime. Civil war had hardened men's hearts. London was under arms, and the usual animosity against Catholics had been excited to the highest pitch by the recent executions of F. Bullaker and several other priests. His Provincial and all his brethren were dispersed over the country, with the exception of F. Colman who was in Newgate; and on the very day of his arrival in London the Capuchins who had long been threatened by the mob had been thrown into prison. Thus it is scarcely possible to conceive destitution more complete than his, when,

penniless, friendless, and on foot, he entered the great city. The following is his own narrative of his arrest, imprisonment, and trial :

‘Having received an obedience from my Superior I crossed the sea in a poor sailor’s dress. I arrived after sunset in London, and went into the inn called the Star, near the bridge of the city, to which I had been directed. But about eight o’clock they turned me out, saying that there was no room for me there. Where should I turn, poor and needy, without money and destitute of all help? For I had come barefoot from Dover where I landed, and I had that day walked forty miles. Overcome by fatigue I sat down to rest for a short time at the door of a citizen, intending afterwards to find out F. Colman to whom I had a letter; but before long the master of the house, who had been out, came back, and asked me a variety of questions while he sent privately for a constable. The latter quickly surrounded me with his people, and again asking me a number of questions, searched me; and being displeased at some papers which I had written in defence of the Catholic Church he sent me to the prison commonly called the Counter.’

Others assert that the constable wished to dismiss him, but was prevented by the officer of the night-watch, who, taking off his cap, desired them to search it, and sewn within it they found the above papers. F. Heath continues :

‘In the morning I was taken before the mayor, and on the way they told me that I should be required to take the oaths of supremacy and allegiance, and that if I refused I should be imprisoned for life. On hearing this I commended myself to God, preferring to declare plainly what I was rather than incur perpetual bonds. When we arrived in the presence of the mayor he looked fixedly at me, and asked,

‘First, whose and what were those papers that

had been found upon my person. I answered that I had myself written them to his government and parliament, in order that if in these perilous times I was taken up, I might give an account of my faith through them.

‘Secondly he asked why I had come to England. I answered that I had come to save souls, as Christ Himself came from heaven to save souls, and sent His Apostles, bidding them teach all nations. He replied, “That is treason.” I rejoined, “Then Christ and His Apostles were traitors when they preached contrary to the laws of the heathen. But Christ is above the laws of infidels and heretics, and therefore we ought not to quit the service of God on account of men.”

‘Thirdly he asked whether I was a priest. I answered, “The priesthood instituted by Christ is honourable, for Christ Himself was a priest. In the Last Supper He made His Apostles priests after the order of Melchisedech and bade them consecrate His Holy Body; and elsewhere He said to them, ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins ye shall retain they are retained.’”¹ Though I am unworthy of such an honour I say in answer to your question, I am a priest.” One of the officers objected, “You are not a priest according to the order of Melchisedech, but according to the Order of Francis.” I rejoined, “Sir, your words prove your ignorance. The Order of S. Francis is a religious order, or profession to follow the example of Jesus Christ. But the order of priesthood is the order of Consecration to consecrate the Body and Blood of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Therefore, whosoever receives the order of Consecration is a priest according to the order of

¹ S. John xx. 22.

Melchisedech, whether he be a Franciscan or belong to any other institute."

'Fourthly he asked me why I went about in that poor and miserable dress. I answered, "To be poor for Christ is to be rich indeed; for Christ made Himself poor for us, and the Apostles of Christ, following in His footsteps, left all." After various other inquiries I was taken away; and as I was going I said, "I console myself by the example of the Apostles, who 'went from the presence of the Council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.'"¹

'Afterwards I appeared before the delegates of the Parliament, and I was asked again by them whether I was a priest or not. I answered almost as before, "The priesthood is not wicked nor unlawful, for it had its origin in the ordination of Christ Himself, who was a priest according to the order of Melchisedech, and made His Apostles priests. Thus S. Paul said, 'Let the priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honour.'² And again, 'Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy with imposition of the hands of the priesthood.'³ And in like manner to Titus, 'I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and shouldst ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee.'⁴ *Presbyter* in Latin is *prêtre* in French, and *priest* in English. The priesthood, therefore, is a Divine institution, and we are under an obligation to defend it, not merely with words and argument, but with our blood. Wherefore I also, though unworthy, am a priest."

'They further asked me with what intention I had come to the country. I replied, "I came to free

¹ Acts v. 41.

² 1 Tim. v. 17.

³ 1 Tim. iv. 14.

⁴ Tit. i. 5.

souls from the servitude of the devil and to convert them from heresy." They asked what was the heresy from which they were to be converted. I replied, "Protestant, Puritan, Brownist, Anabaptist, and many others, for as many as profess these are rightly called heretics." They added many useless questions, as to the day, the hour that I had come to this or that place, to which I gave fitting replies.'

M. de Marsys, who was present at F. Heath's trial, says that they questioned him as to the persons who had paid his expenses since he had been a Catholic. But he told them his conscience did not permit him to name them. Then they threatened him if he would not tell. But he answered them with so much ability and knowledge of theology that they were astonished to hear such things from one so meanly dressed. F. Heath continues :

'Afterwards I was brought up before the judges of the sessions, where my accusation was read and I was accused of the deadly crime of being a seminary priest and a traitor. I began an apology which I had in my mind, thus : "I think myself fortunate, most noble lords, that my cause should be judged in so solemn an assembly and that I should have the opportunity of answering for myself. I confess that formerly, up to my twenty-fourth year, I was a Protestant and professed the same heresy that you do now. But as Job says, 'Perish the day in which I was born,' so I heap up curses and execrations on the day in which I began to imbibe the Protestant superstition." I intended to have spoken at greater length, but the judge exclaimed, "Stop him instantly, for he appears to be only casting reproaches on our religion. Cut short all his subterfuges and make him answer the accusation." I then denied that I was a seminary priest, but not that I was a Roman and Catholic priest. I asserted that it was a great honour to

have received the priesthood of our Saviour. The judge insisted that it was the crime of treason. To which I answered, "I will prove that according to such reasoning Christ Himself and His holy Apostles are to be accounted criminals and traitors, because they were priests and preached in defiance of the laws of the kingdom." He was not satisfied with this reasoning and insisted that it was opposed to the laws of the kingdom. I answered, "The laws are tyrannical and contrary to the Christian religion." He then angrily repeated the question, "Are you guilty or not guilty?" I answered, "If you mean that I am guilty of a crime, I am not guilty; but if you mean what I have just confessed, I am guilty." On hearing this some of the bystanders said, "You are a dead man." I rejoined, "It is very glorious to die for Christ." Finally, they refused me permission to speak (De Marsys says they threatened to put a padlock on his lips), 'and they passed sentence of death on me. On hearing it I said, "I give thanks to this honourable court for the singular favour they have done me, for now I am going to die for Christ."'

Some report that he said, 'This is my glory, my solace, my blessing.'

Among the papers which F. Heath left behind him and which appear to have been those found in his cap, was an address which seems to have been what he began to say to his judges before they cut him short. In it he described and commented on his Protestant experience, and contrasted it with his Catholic life. There was also an address which he apparently intended to have spoken after judgment was passed upon him, and which he began upon the scaffold, but was prevented from finishing. In it he showed from history how the Church of Christ had been persecuted from the earliest times till the present

day, and how various and opposite heresies had successively arisen and passed away, while the Catholic Church, which Christ had founded upon Himself and His Vicar, S. Peter, had always remained immovable and infallible, and the gates of hell had never prevailed against it.

While he was in prison he wrote the following letter to a friend who was a priest :¹

‘ Reverend Father,—Your consolations filled my soul with joy. The judges have not yet passed sentence. I beseech the Divine Goodness that it may be according to my wishes, that I may die for my Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, father, what else can I desire than to suffer with Christ, to be rejected with Christ, to be crucified with Christ, to die a thousand deaths, that I may live eternally with Christ? If it be the glory of the soldier to be like his Lord, far be it from me to glory in aught except the cross of the Crucified. Let the executioners come, let them tear my body in pieces, let them gnaw my flesh with their teeth, let them pierce me through and through, and grind me to dust. For I know, I know indeed, how much it profiteth me to die for Christ. This momentary suffering will work a weight of glory in heaven. Reverend father, pray for me, a miserable sinner, that I may be always in the wounds of the Crucified till death is swallowed up in victory.

‘ Your Reverence’s most devoted Brother,
‘ F. PAUL OF S. MAGDALEN.’

During the time that elapsed between F. Heath’s sentence and his execution, an incredible number of persons, both Catholics and Protestants, came to see and hear him. No less than forty ministers came to dispute with him, all of whom went away defeated

¹ Challoner, *Missionary Priests*, vol. ii. c. clxxvi.

and abashed, and almost all sighing and in great sorrow, affirming that they had never before met with a man of such learning and such gifts. Some were converted by his arguments, and others declared in the presence of the emperor's ambassador, who also came to visit the martyr, that he was marvelously skilled in scholastics. Catholics came to ask his blessing for themselves or on the cords which in imitation of S. Francis they wore in remembrance of our Lord's Passion, or to get his signature on a picture, or to obtain as a relic something that had belonged to him.

During all this time he was so occupied talking to Protestants, consoling the afflicted, or hearing confessions, that he had scarcely a moment's leisure to take the rest which his worn-out body greatly needed. He looked so wonderfully happy that one of his friends asked him how he could feel such joy and consolation, since every one has a natural horror of death. He answered, 'I never doubted that my most merciful God would grant a special sweetness to him who laid down his life for justice and in defence of the faith. But I could not possibly have conceived anything so excessive as the joy which I now experience and which so overwhelms and melts my soul that I can scarcely bear it.'

When at length the hour of his passion arrived he went down-stairs most joyfully. As he went he read out the following declaration about the oath of allegiance, which he had already signed in the presence of FF. Thomas Harvey, Simon de Mazaron, and William Jordan, all of them Jesuits, who gave it to his biographer with their attestation of its genuineness :

'Declaration of the Rev. F. Paul of S. Magdalen about the oath of allegiance :

‘I, the undersigned, through the grace and favour of my sweetest Jesus am about to-day to lay down my life for His sacred law and in defence of the Roman Catholic Church, and to offer to Him the most precious offering, after the gain of souls, that I can conceive. I declare with my whole heart to all, and especially to Catholics whom it most concerns, that the oath of allegiance, as it is called, cannot, and ought not, by any means or interpretation, to be taken by them, that is to say, without the commission of grave sin and certain ruin of their souls unless they repent. I would give my life in defence of this as willingly as for any other article or for the whole of our holy faith. I am certainly convinced that I should not die rightly if I held any other doctrine or opinion about that oath. In testimony of which I am now about to give my life for God, and I subscribe my name with my own hand in Newgate, Tuesday, 27th April 1643.

‘Such is my opinion, F. Paul of S. Magdalen, now called to the scaffold.’

On reaching the street and seeing the hurdle with the horses attached to it, he threw himself on the ground, and asked to be tied to the horses’ tails and to be thus dragged to the scaffold. But his request was denied, and he made the rough and painful journey in the usual way. As he went along he sang, ‘Nunc dimittis;’ and after finishing it he made acts of contrition or ejaculated, ‘Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, forgive my sins! Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, receive my spirit!’ He also prayed God to remove the darkness and blindness of the Protestants, and exclaimed from time to time, ‘England, England, be converted to the Lord thy God!’ A Protestant minister exhorting him to place his confidence solely on the merits of Jesus Christ, he answered him so much to the point from

S. Thomas that a Protestant officer who stood by, being distressed at the confusion of his minister, struck him on the mouth with a stick and bade him go to school.

As he ascended the scaffold he exclaimed in a loud voice, 'Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.' With the rope round his neck he addressed the people, and explained to them, as we have already told, how the Catholic Church had always been persecuted but had ever remained immovable while the various heresies of her persecutors had become extinct. He said that he thought it a great blessing to die for the true Spouse of Christ, that he had come to England with no other object than to die in preaching the Catholic religion, and that this was the sole cause for which he was about to be put to death.

He would have added more had not the Protestant ministers interrupted him, saying that he was not about to suffer for his religion but as a seducer of the people. He answered, 'No otherwise can I be called a seducer than as my Lord Jesus Christ was so called by the Jews.' Irritated at this answer they bade him be silent. He then asked leave of the sheriff to die naked in imitation of Christ his Saviour; but his request was refused. While those who were to be executed with him sang Protestant hymns, according to custom, trustworthy witnesses attest that he reconciled to the Church one of his fellow-sufferers, who had been justly condemned as a thief. Claspings his hands and closing his eyes he remained in prayer motionless almost half an hour. Then, it being the feast of Pope Anicetus, martyr, he intoned in a loud voice the martyr's hymn, 'Invicte martyr,' to its close. Finally he raised his hands above his head, as a signal for receiving absolution, and sighing, with the sweetest accent he exclaimed, 'Jesus, Mary, Jesus, forgive my sins! Jesus, convert England! Jesus,

have mercy on this country! England, be converted to the Lord thy God! The ladder being then withdrawn he remained hanging in the air, his hands raised to heaven, his eyes cast down, and thus, placidly and joyfully, he expired. After the usual barbarities had been inflicted on his dead body his head was cut off and placed on London Bridge, and his quarters on the gates of the city.

Both Count Egmont and M. de Marsys were present at his execution. The servants of the former, by his order and in his sight, collected as relics one of F. Heath's toes, three small bones, a piece of his windpipe, some of his burnt flesh, the straw on which he was laid to be disembowelled, four napkins dipped in his blood, and the rope with which he was hanged, the certificate of authentication of which is to be seen in the archives of Lille.¹

There was a tradition at the Convent of S. Bonaventure at Douai that F. Heath himself brought the news of his execution to his brethren by appearing to his father, who was still alive and a lay brother in the community.²

CHAPTER XIV.

F. BELL.

THE next Recollect martyr was F. Arthur Bell, in religion Francis.³ Though not inferior in saintliness to his brethren who had preceded him, he was

¹ In the Convent of our Lady of Dolours at Taunton are two small pieces of F. Heath's bones about two inches square, a corporal dipped in his blood, and a piece of the rope with which he was hanged.

² Challoner, *Missionary Priests*, vol. ii. c. clxxvi.

³ This life of F. Bell is taken chiefly from the *Certamen Seraphicum*.

quite different from them in character. His vocation, like F. Bullaker's, was to the active life, and his work lay in the missionary field. He was, however, distinguished by a rare union of learning with a sweet, joyous, and ardent temper, and an overflowing sympathy with all his fellow-creatures which drew to him all who crossed his path. But the fire of Divine love burned as brightly in him as in his martyr brothers, and running side by side with them like S. Peter with S. John, he won the same glorious crown.

F. Bell was born on the 13th January 1590, of Catholic parents of good family, in the Manor House of Temple-Broughton, in the parish of Hanbury, six miles from Worcester. Both his parents were remarkable for their Christian virtues and their devotion to the Catholic faith. His father dying when he was eight years old he was brought up by a tutor till he was thirteen in his widowed mother's house. He then went to his maternal uncle, Francis Daniel, of Acton House, near Long Melford in Suffolk, to be educated with his sons. Three years later his uncle sent him back to his mother on account of the persecution which had revived after the Gunpowder Plot; but as soon as its severity had somewhat abated he returned to his uncle, with whom he remained till he had attained his twenty-fourth year.

He now left England and went to the Jesuit College at S. Omer with the intention of taking holy orders. At the end of a year the Jesuits sent him to their college at Valladolid in Spain, where, after pursuing his higher studies for three years, he was ordained priest. His fervour in saying the Divine Office and celebrating Mass were especially remarked. At the same time his sweetness and gentleness won all hearts. From day to day he advanced in the path of perfection, till at length he

obtained a vocation to offer himself as a fragrant sacrifice on the humble and poor altar of the Friars Minor, and by the perfect renunciation of all earthly things to bear Christ's banner of the Cross with greater alacrity and firmness. With the consent of the Jesuit fathers he asked for admission into the Order of S. Francis in the Province of the Immaculate Conception, and the Provincial discerning his fine character, his talents, and his spiritual gifts, at once granted his request. He did so the more readily because there was already in the Province another Englishman, F. Nicholas Day, of whom we have already spoken, who at this time held the offices of Lecturer on Theology and preacher, and by his piety and devotion was an example to all.

On the 9th of August 1618 F. Bell received the habit and the name Francis from F. Sebastian de Salazar, Guardian of the Convent of Segovia. During his novitiate he gave great edification by his humility and observance of the rule. Though he was a priest, yet in his own eyes he was inferior to all his brethren, and in self-abjection he would often prostrate himself at their feet. In the following year, on September 8th, the feast of our Blessed Lady's Nativity, he made his vows to F. Joseph of Sta. Clara, and soon after he was raised to the office of preacher. His theological studies had been interrupted during his novitiate, but he now got leave to resume them. Dead to all motives of human praise or intellectual gratification, his industry was stimulated solely by his desire for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. His zeal was especially spurred on by the hope of converting his native land, and with this view he studied night and day how to unravel the ingenious subtleties on which Protestantism supports itself and to master the arguments best calculated to refute them.

Before the close of the year he was summoned by

F. Genings, under the authority of the Minister-General, to join him and assist in the restoration of the English Province. On his arrival in Belgium he took up his abode in the College of S. Bonaventure at Douai. Through the charity of the Benedictines of that town he was enabled to study theology in their schools for two years longer. His loving nature and ardent zeal for the object to which he had vowed his affections gave a peculiarly elevated and attractive tone to his character. This tender devotion imparted marvellous sweetness and serenity to all his words and acts, while spiritual joy, which often he found it impossible to restrain, shone forth in his countenance and whole demeanour. By strict observance of the rule, prompt obedience, love of poverty, cheerfulness, close union with his brethren, and dependence on the guidance and operation of the Holy Spirit, whether in prayer, preaching, or labour, he proved himself a true Friar Minor. Like his Seraphic Father he deemed himself the greatest of sinners, being convinced that the most wicked man that ever existed would have corresponded better than he had done to the graces that had been showered on him. Hence, also like S. Francis, he was in the habit of commending himself to the prayers of those who were far inferior to himself in virtue. In short, his biographer, F. Angelus Mason, who had been his novice and was greatly attached to him, thus sums up his character, as if for his epitaph—‘F. Francis Bell was a true son of the Seraphic Father S. Francis.’¹

From his earliest years he had had a special devotion to our Blessed Lady. He bound himself by vow to recite her Office daily, and he was in the habit of saying it alternately in Latin, Hebrew, Greek, Spanish, French, Flemish, and English; but whether he did so in order to make reparation for any defects

¹ *Certamen Seraphicum*, p. 136.

into which his numerous occupations might have led him, or as a means to keep his mind more awake, is uncertain. In all his difficulties he asked her aid, placed himself under her protection, and fled to her as his safest refuge; and it may be considered a special mark of her favour that the three principal events of his life, namely, his profession, his joining the English mission, and his condemnation, all took place on her feasts. For twenty years he urgently besought of her the grace of martyrdom, and with the same intention he daily repeated the thirty-fifth psalm, which so well befits a suffering martyr.

In 1622 he was appointed Confessor to the Community of English Poor Clares at Gravelines. In the following year he was transferred to the same office in the Convent of S. Elizabeth at Brussels. Here he remained for seven years, labouring with so much tenderness and zeal for the new foundation, that to the present day he is loved and venerated by the community as its true father and founder. He wrote the first pages of its archives. He translated from the Spanish the life of Blessed Joanna of the Cross, Abbess of the Convent of S. Maria de Cruce in the diocese of Toledo, and had it printed for its use. He had also the little book of the rule printed, and at the end of his dedication, he prays 'that the plantation may remain on earth till our Saviour Jesus Christ comes to judge the world,' a prayer which at the present time seems to be answered by the flourishing position in which the community, after severe trials, finds itself settled at Taunton. The following letter, which he wrote from England the year before his death to Mother Margaret Clare West on her election as Abbess in 1640, is preserved in the house as a relic :

‘Reverende Mother Abbasse,—I give God thancks

and hertily congratulate your election. I received a letter from you, dated Februarie 15, 1641, with a picture exceeding curiously wrought about the border; and another letter, dated the 2d of March 1641, with a little crosse of Mother Catherine's,¹ which I knew as sone as I sawe it. God have mercie on her soule, and double her spirit upon you, that you may wisely governe and conduct His handmaides to Him. I will not cesse to pray for you, as I would be prayed for by you and the saints with you, who, sitting safe in the porte I hope will be mindfull of us that are tossed in the waves of persecution, in continuall feares to lose all that we have, and our lives which we set at nought to save the Catholike faith entire. Ye are right happie that ye are there shrouded from the world, where ye see not the evilles that are done under the sunne nor hear the continuall execrable blasphemies spoken and written heer by the adversaries against God's Church. Live and enjoy that happinesse till God of His mercie give us greater and everlasting. These be the wishes of your Reverence's poor brother,

FRANCIS BEL.²

'London, this 3 of April 1642.'

In 1630, when the Province was formally restored at the First Provincial Council held at S. Elizabeth's Convent, as already mentioned, F. Bell was appointed by the Minister-General one of the first Definitors, and simultaneously was elected by his brethren Guardian of the Convent of S. Bonaventure and Professor of Hebrew, for which latter office

¹ Catherine Frances Wilcox, by birth Greenway, the first abbess, resigned her office in November 1640, and died on the 17th of February 1642.

² This letter is indorsed 'To the R^{de}. Mother Sr. Margarite Clare, Abbess of the Cloyster of English Religious of 3d Order of S. Francis in Newporte.'

he was specially qualified by his familiarity with several languages. In the various high offices that he held he always behaved to his subjects as if he were one of themselves, being their guide by his example rather than their ruler. Though he easily pardoned their transgressions, yet he never neglected the charitable correction of their faults nor remitted the vigilance befitting a faithful servant and steward of his Lord. He was so beloved that F. Angelus says his brethren regarded him 'as the light of their eyes,' and he himself considered it the most auspicious event of his life and one of the great consolations which he daily experienced in religion, that he should have been permitted to make his profession to him.

Scarcely had two years of his guardianship expired when to his own great sorrow and amid the tears of his brethren, he was summoned to Brussels by the Commissary-General, F. Joseph Bergaigne, and ordered by him to go and restore the Scotch Province, of which he had been appointed First Provincial in the Chapter General recently held in Spain. In Scotland, thrice happy in having so great a saint and martyr for the second founder of its Franciscan Province, he performed his task with great success; and the seed which he sowed with his prayers and watered with his blood is now, after the trials of above two centuries, again bursting into life in this 'second spring' and bearing flowers and fruits. At the close of his provincialship in 1634, F. Bergaigne, who always bore him in affectionate remembrance, recalled him to the English Province which was henceforth to be the field of his labour, and after nine years of his victory. He was now elected Guardian of London, and three years later was once more appointed one of the Definitors.

The last work on which he was employed was the singularly appropriate one of verifying the acts

of the martyrs, among whom before the close of the year he was to be numbered. In consequence of the great sensation created throughout Europe by the recent martyrdoms in England, Pope Urban VIII. in 1643 directed a brief to F. Bergaigne, now Archbishop of Cambrai, empowering him in the absence of Bishop Smith, the Vicar-Apostolic, then in exile, to nominate a commission of English priests 'to make diligent inquiry into the cause and manner of death of several priests lately put to death upon the penal statutes, . . . and to certify the same to the Archbishop of Cambrai, to be by him transmitted to Rome.' The priests were 'personally to repair to places where informations were likely to be had, and to call before them persons of credit and integrity who had been acquainted with the said priests, the particulars of their trials, and their behaviour at the place of execution. All this information was to be taken on oath.'¹ F. Bell was one of the commission thus appointed. He had met F. Bullaker as he was leaving Newgate and had doubtless followed him to Tyburn ; so that he could have given personal evidence in his case at least, and probably in many of the others. The report which was drawn up by him and the other Commissioners cannot now be found ; but it seems to have been such as to have called forth another Papal brief authorising the placing of the relics of these saints in altar stones, and their pictures over altars. The original of this latter document is unhappily not forthcoming in the Archives at Rome, and thus, until further successful search has been made, or till fresh proceedings have been instituted, their canonisation is suspended.

It is easy to imagine how F. Bell's thirst for martyrdom must have been increased by the prosecu-

¹ Ms. in the Town Library at Douai, No. 829, ap. Rambler, new series, vol. viii. p. 118.

tion of this inquiry. Scarcely had it been completed when he was apprehended on the 7th November 1643 at Stevenage in Hertfordshire.

The following is the account of his capture which he wrote in prison to the Benedictine Nuns of Brussels, who are now at East Bergholt in Suffolk, and who possess the original:¹

‘Monday, November 6.—I sett out from Brigstock in Northamptonsheer, on a carrier’s horse I hired, for London. Travailinge on my waye, on Twesdaye, I was staide at Stevenedge by the garrison, who asked mee for letters, and tooke what I had, which were two or 3. I thinke of noe importance; but by chaunce they found in my pockett a little ragg of scribbled paper in Spanish: it was a ragge of paper broken that I never regarded, nor thought of, nor knew I had any such in my pockett; yet this declared me a Franciscan, professed in Segovia. This bitt of paper was never shewed mee till I came at London. At Stevenedge in Hartforsheer, were I was taken, I was kept 24 houres continually watched by 3 souldiers. On Wensdaye I was carried by Lieutenant Hall (whose sentinell tooke mee) and by Thomas Jones (marshall of a brigade of 3000 men) to Hartford, 8 miles. There my papers were delivered to the comitee of the countye, Mr. Barber by name. Committee Barber delivered mee to Marshall Jones’ custodie, to be safe conducted to the Parliament, on Thursdaye morninge. All that ever I had was taken from mee by the marshall, meony and closes, shirt, bootes, and ould raggs given mee to put on. In these I rodd to London without bootes. I lay at the Angel in Bishopsgate-streete, 3 souldiers watchinge in my chamber at night.

¹ For the copy of this letter we are indebted to the kindness of the Abbess of the Convent of our Lady of Dolours at Taunton.

Frydaie morninge I was examined at the Parliament house, before Miles Corbet, Laurence Witaker, and Sr Thomas Dacres—in fine, they have committed mee to Newgate for a Franciscan confessed, and a Roman priest suspected. I hope nobody shall have any harme by anything I have saide, and for myself the worst they can doe to mee is the best and most desired. God's holye will bee done.'

From F. Angelus we have the following further particulars:¹ The soldiers being apparently unable to read the papers which were found at the bottom of his pocket, the schoolmaster was called in to decipher and interpret them. One of them was a parchment on which F. Bell, to assist his memory, had written the nine lessons of the Office of the Blessed Sacrament and other prayers of the same kind. This the schoolmaster described as 'very serious matter and dangerous for the public safety;' and the Parliamentary Commissioners afterwards confirmed his opinion. This shows how completely the remembrance of these pious prayers had been banished with religion from England. On another of the papers was written the prayer, 'God, who in order to redeem Thy servant, wast pleased to bind Thy Son,' &c. ; and also the form for blessing the cord of S. Francis, 'Receive upon thy loins,' &c. These were pronounced to be very malicious and dangerous.

The 'little ragg of scribbled paper in Spanish' seems to have baffled the schoolmaster, since it was not brought forward till he was in London. It ran thus :

'Most excellent Lord, F. Francis Bell, of the Order of S. Francis, professed at Segovia, declares that he receives with great gratitude your offer to let him remain concealed in your house. But he humbly

¹ Certamen Seraphicum, p. 137.

entreats not to be bound by the condition, which is contrary to his mission, that he should never go into public to minister to the salvation of his neighbours, to which he can never consent.' This was a copy of what F. Bell had written to Don Alonzo de Cardenas, the Spanish ambassador, who had offered him an asylum in his house in London, and from regard to his personal safety had wished to impose on him the above condition. But F. Bell would have thought himself guilty of the blackest crime had he preferred his own safety to the public good, and remained in idleness and luxury when it was incumbent on him to devote his whole powers to the propagation of the faith, the refutation of heresy, and the salvation of souls. The suspicions of his captors were further excited by the declaration of a drummer who happened to be in the crowd which gathered round them, that he had seen F. Bell at Oxford where the king then was. But this was quite false, for F. Bell had never been there. He was therefore committed to the care of the soldiers who watched him day and night; and on the following morning, Wednesday, the 8th November, he was taken by Lieutenant Hall and Thomas Jones to Hertford, where his papers were delivered up and he was again examined.

The following is the account of his examination which F. Bell wrote in order to correct false reports of it that had been printed and put in circulation :

'Many officers, generals, and persons of various classes visited me, and one of them asked me of what religion I was. I instantly answered, "I am a Catholic." "A Roman Catholic?" he asked. I replied, "Just now I told you that I was an Englishman. How then can I be a Roman? As to the Catholic Church, there is only one Catholic Church, of which I am a member." All applauded this answer, chiefly because I did not conceal my religion.

I added, "This, through God's grace, I will profess till my death." Another then asked me with great solemnity, "Do you not believe that the Pope is the Supreme Head of the Catholic Church?" I answered, "I do believe it, and I never doubted it." They then began to dispute in a confused way, as usual, upon the Church and its succession founded on S. Peter. A Bible was brought to look out texts. I detected several that were very corrupt and reproached them very justly with them. After a great deal of talking on one subject and another I reproved their foolish opinions thus: "To call each of the religions doubtful and uncertain is not the way to attract others to your doctrine, but rather to establish and confirm them in that of the Church to which Christ has promised infallibility. All your efforts tend to this: that while you prove that every religion has erred, you try to draw me from that which cannot err to that which must necessarily err, and thus to deprive me of that which I possess and leave me nothing. You would act to my soul as you have done to my body, for you have taken away all my clothes and supplied their place with rags." After some time the disquisitions were broken off, rather than finished. When I had told them that out of the Catholic Church no salvation is to be hoped for and that I wished all of them were like me, except my bonds, the officers retired and left me with my guard.

'A contention now arose as to who should take me to the Parliamentary Commissioners of Hertfordshire. At length one who seemed more zealous than the others, probably because he wished to gain the favour of the Parliament, prevailed, and presented me to the Commissioners with all my papers. In so doing he added the caution, that the paper on which the blessing of the cord was written was an incantation by which I could escape out of any prison or dungeon.

'The chief commissioner asked me whether I came from abroad. I answered in the affirmative. He then asked whether I had received holy orders. I answered that as this was considered a crime no one was required to answer such a question. The marshal who had accompanied me on the journey was irritated by my answer. He claimed me as his prisoner by right of his office, and interrupted us, saying that I was reserved for further examination. For the present he limited himself to stripping me to the skin, which had not been done before; and finding a key, he threatened me with all sorts of tortures unless I would say instantly and truly where was the lock to which it belonged. Hereupon I said within myself, "Lord, suffer me not to be tormented for gold and silver." Then perceiving that no injury could arise to others, I answered simply that it was in the hands of the porter of the Spanish ambassador. Rejoicing at the thought of his booty he placed me in close custody for that night. The next morning he went to the chief commissioner and gave into his care the above-mentioned papers, together with the tablets, all tied up together, to be delivered to the Parliament.'

F. Bell goes on to describe in his narrative, of which F. Angelus only gives us a summary, how his keeper having him completely in his power, robbed him of all that remained to him and left him almost naked. The holy man was filled with joy that he should have been treated like his Lord and his own Seraphic Father, S. Francis, who had been left naked by his father; and when the soldiers gave him some old and torn rags to cover himself with he was filled with greater joy at receiving this new habit of the Friar Minor than he had felt when he had first been clothed and admitted into the Order. He was then placed almost naked on the bare back of a horse, and

led in the midst of pouring rain through the towns and villages, hooted and abused as a criminal by all whom he met, and ill-treated by his conductors. Blessed Br. Giles, a man of rare sanctity, has said, 'Thy soul should cleave especially to three things. The first is, that thou willingly bearest every trouble that befalls thee; the second, that for all thou doest and receivest thou shouldst more and more humble thyself; the third, that thou shouldst faithfully love that good which cannot be seen by bodily eyes.' With all three, which are closely connected together, F. Bell was already very familiar. He had only to recall the words of his Seraphic Father which were impressed upon his memory: 'Dearest brethren, have always before your eyes the way of humility and poverty and of the holy Cross, by which our Saviour Jesus Christ leads us on; considering that if it befitted His Divine Majesty to suffer and thus to enter into His glory, much rather does it befit us, great sinners, to follow in the path of His Cross and Passion. And certainly, if every Christian is bound to take up his cross, the obligation is much stronger on us who profess to follow the banner of the Cross. For God wills that not only we ourselves should bear it, but that we should incite others by our example to take it up and draw them along with us, in order that in company with them we may follow Christ our Leader.'¹

On their arrival in London the marshal who had watched him very closely during the journey, shut him up in a secluded room the doors of which he locked and barred. He then persuaded him to send for the trunk of which he had the key; and though F. Bell saw what was his object, he readily assented, fearing lest by a refusal he should bring the porter who had the charge of it into trouble. It is scarcely

¹ S. Francis, Collat. 24, ap. Cert. Seraph. p. 141.

necessary to add that when the box arrived the marshal took possession of all that was in it.

Shortly after F. Bell was taken before three Parliamentary Commissioners, Sir Thomas Dacres, Mr. Corbet, and Mr. Whitaker. While he was kept waiting at the door all who passed hooted and jeered him. In answer to the inquiries of the commissioners he told them that he was born at Hanbury in Worcestershire, and that he received the name Arthur in baptism, and Francis about thirty years ago at S. Omer, explaining to them that Catholics take a name at confirmation. Mr. Corbet began to question him about the persons named in his papers. He begged of him not to ask him about any third person, because it was against his conscience to injure any one. Mr. Whitaker, however, insisted that when it was for the public good such considerations ought not to be respected. They then proceeded to examine the paper he had written for the Spanish ambassador and asked whether it was his writing. He acknowledged that it was, adding that it was only a rough sketch of what he was thinking of writing. They asked him if it did not show that he was of the Order of S. Francis, many members of which by their own confession had been already brought before them. He replied that he was a poor penitent of the Order of S. Francis, and it was lawful for any one to do penance. They asked instantly if he was a priest. He replied that such a question ought not to be asked; for were he to answer in the affirmative it would be a crime, and if in the negative it would be to the prejudice of others. Afterwards they asked many questions about the Breviary which he acknowledged to be his, and which, he said, contained many prayers dictated by the Holy Ghost. Mr. Whitaker objected that they were mixed up with idolatry which poisoned all the rest. Some of the bystanders, however, sug-

gested that it was a Missal, and the commissioners were inclined to believe that it was. But F. Bell explained to them the difference between the two books, and that this was the Roman Breviary and not the Roman Missal. Finally, they condemned him as a Friar Minor by his own confession and a Roman priest suspected to be lodged in Newgate. Before he was taken there, the commissioners having understood that Marshal Jones had taken away his clothes, ordered him to restore them to him, as they did not sanction anything being taken from him till he has convicted. Jones promised to restore them but never did so. On which F. Bell says, 'I shall hear no more of my possessions till the day of judgment, when I fear that I shall be reproached for having violated holy poverty by having had so many things to be taken away from me. I firmly believe that these men were appointed by God to recall my vocation to my remembrance. Deo gratias.'

Scarcely had he been four-and-twenty hours in prison when he received the following obedience in a letter from his Provincial, F. George of S. William. It was addressed to 'his dearest brother, Francis Bell.'

'My dearest Francis,—It seems to me that I have been deprived for a very long time of the pleasure of talking to you and seeing you, especially as I have not had any news of you. But not a single day has passed in which I have not thought of you, as I hope that you have also thought of me. On the death of Paul several of the brethren, with whom I agreed, urged me to call you by every possible obligation to take his place. Accordingly, by the present letter I urgently ask, order, or in any other way that you may think necessary bid you return as soon as possible to this Province. And if in this you fulfil my

wishes God will be your reward, and I shall remain your poor and most loving brother,

‘GEORGE WILLIAM.

‘September 1st, 1643.’

Paul here referred to was F. Heath, who at the time of his martyrdom a few months before was Guardian of the Convent at Douai; and when the Provincial said that he wished F. Bell to take his place, he meant to say, ‘I ask you to be his successor.’ But F. Bell took his words in a different sense and returned the following answer,

‘Reverend Father,—I received your command with all due humility and promptitude in carrying it into execution. Twenty-four hours before it reached me I had taken possession of the blessed Father Paul’s place in Newgate. It only remains then for me to ask your prayers that I may persevere to the end. I entreat all Christians, and also S. Andrew, not to prevent my passion.—Your poor brother,

‘F. BELL.’

Not long after he received orders to the same effect from the Commissary-General, F. Peter Marchant, who explained that as the success of their missions depended in the first place on the college at Douai, and there were not in the convent a sufficient number of persons qualified to help F. Angelus Mason, who could not by himself alone carry out the necessary duties, he ordered him to return thither as soon as possible. The following was F. Bell’s answer :

‘Most Reverend Father, obedience and reverence,—I have humbly received your paternity’s command, and I shall obey it with all possible haste as soon as the present impediment, for which no excuse

is necessary, is removed. The impediment is the following: On the 6th November, o.s., I was taken prisoner by parliamentary soldiers near London, was interrogated, and being found to be of the Catholic religion was kept day and night in charge of four soldiers. I was deprived of all my things, my sword, my money, my clothes, even to my shirt, and covered with the rags of some beggar which the soldiers gave me. I was brought to the Parliament in London, where I was again examined, and being recognised by certain signs to be a Friar Minor, which I did not deny, and suspected also to be a priest in Roman Orders, I was placed in Newgate prison. I am to be brought finally to trial on the 5th of December. Whatever may be about to happen to me, my Lord Jesus Christ knows that I am prepared to go with Him to the Cross and to death, if He in His mercy will deign so far as to accept the sacrifice of such and so great a sinner. But if I am necessary to His people I do not refuse labour; the will of our Lord be done. I have long asked to die for Christ. This I desire. My sinful life has long been hateful to me. Forgive me, I know what is profitable for me. My gain is to die. I supplicate your prayers and those of the brethren, that if it should happen to me to die as I wish I may depart in the obedience and grace of Christ; and with S. Andrew the Apostle I beg all Christian people not to prevent my passion. If I should not be condemned to death I will use every lawful means to recover my liberty that I may obey your orders as is fitting. May the good and great God preserve us always!

‘Written from Newgate prison in London, Nov. 22d, 1643.’

To F. Bell may be applied what the Church sings of S. Martin, ‘O man, above all praise, neither con-

quered by labour nor by death, who feared not to die, and refused not to live.' Thus he attained to the highest perfection of obedience. When the long-desired martyr's palm was within his sight he was ready to resign it without the least hesitation at the call of obedience, and thus he won the double crown, not only of martyrdom but of obedience, which, the Scripture says, is better than sacrifice.

On the 7th of December, the vigil of the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, F. Bell was brought before the Lord Mayor and the other judges who sat on the bench with him. His indictment was read out at full length, that, being born a subject of the Queen of England he had gone abroad, had studied in the Papal seminaries, and had received priest's orders by the authority of the Roman See, contrary to the statutes of Elizabeth and James, &c. At its conclusion the judges asked what he had to say in his defence. He called for his accusers. They promised that he should see them the next day, but for the present he had to answer whether he was guilty or not guilty. He replied, 'I do not consider it a crime to have gone beyond the seas, to have received holy orders, and to have returned here again. Wherefore I declare that I am not guilty.' They insisted, 'You ought to have answered the question that is asked. What is your answer?' He replied, 'It is the same as I have already given to the high commissioners, and I can give you no other.' They rejoined, 'We understood that before; but now we want your answer in a legal form. Are you guilty or not guilty?' He briefly replied, 'If that be your form, I assert that I am not guilty.' According to custom they went on to ask by whom he would be judged. Some of the bystanders suggested, 'By God and your country.' After some hesitation he said, 'By God and my country.'

As evening was drawing in he was taken back to Newgate.

Early the next morning, which was the feast of the Immaculate Conception, he was placed at the bar before the judges and the jury, and according to custom his accusers were sworn. The first of the witnesses was the infamous apostate James Wadsworth, who was the relative of a lady who was a great friend of F. Bell's. As soon as he had heard that a prisoner suspected of being a priest was about to be tried, he had rushed like a ravening wolf upon his prey. He said, 'I knew the prisoner in Brussels in the habit of S. Francis twenty years ago, when he was esteemed by all as an honest and simple brother. This is all that I can say.' This, however, was a lie, for he knew quite well that he was a priest. The next witness was Thomas Mayo, a man of the same class, who said, 'I knew the prisoner at Grave-lines at the Monastery of the Poor Clares whither I took a young lady called Maria Pickford. He was then one of the priests of the monastery. I knew him also in the Franciscan Convent at Douai where he lived with F. Valentine,' &c. Thomas Gage, a double apostate, was the third witness. He said, 'I knew the prisoner in London with a certain noble lady, my relative, whose name, with your permission, I will not mention as it has no connection with this affair. I saw him often saying Mass in her chapel, and he complained to me that he could never say it before midday because the lady indulged herself in sleep till a late hour.' Here his evidence broke down, for he had unconsciously wandered to the evidence against another priest who had already been set at liberty. He was sharply reproved by the judges and retired. His place was taken by another good-for-nothing fellow called Newton; but he had little to attest, as he had not received instructions on the subject.

Afterwards the judges asked F. Bell what he had to say to the depositions of these witnesses. He answered, 'They are infamous persons whose depositions are not to be believed.' They replied, 'What objection can you make to them?' He rejoined, 'All of them are apostates from the Catholic religion, and those who have broken their faith with God cannot justly and ought not to find faith with men.' They insisted, however, that his objection was not valid; and they asked whether he wished to say anything to the jury. He replied in the negative, but expressed a hope that the jury were Christians, adding, 'I am not a priest of the order of Levi according to the priesthood of Aaron; nor would it be wise, were one called to the priesthood by God to neglect the fountain itself and drink from muddy waters.' The registrar remarked, 'You speak mystically. Have you nothing else to say?' He answered, 'Nothing. I refer to the answers that I gave at my examination before the high commissioners.' A copy of his examination was then given him, and after reading it he approved of it and declared that he had nothing more to add. The jury retired, and after a short consultation they returned and the foreman declared him guilty. On hearing this F. Bell thanked them.

The judges seem to have been touched by F. Bell's frank and courageous bearing. In order to afford him a chance of escape they deferred his sentence for a few hours, so as to give him time to reflect on the dreadful punishment which awaited him. One of the judges urged him to profit by the delay, saying, 'Mr. Bell, you will be cut open while you are still alive, and with your own eyes you will see your entrails burnt before your face; wherefore we beseech you to abjure the Roman Church, or at least the priesthood, so as to avoid this disgraceful and cruel punishment.' The holy man, unappalled, an-

swered, 'You can condemn me to a light and temporary punishment; but the Protector and Avenger of the innocent can condemn you to a punishment which will last eternally.' He was then carried back to prison.

In the afternoon he was recalled and given leave to speak before his sentence was pronounced. On hearing that he was about to be sentenced he was transported with joy and said, 'My accusers have borne witness against me; the jury have found me guilty. I thank them all heartily; for I am about to die with Christ and His apostles and martyrs, and my cause is the same as theirs. That which I am about to say is of as great or even greater importance than what was spoken by the prophets of old. I therefore invoke heaven and earth in their words: "Be astonished, ye heavens, and be confounded, O earth," to behold a nation which professes to believe in Christ and His Gospel, and yet condemns as treason the priesthood established by Christ and by that Gospel, that priesthood I say which the Gospel upholds, and by which the Gospel itself is upheld. This is the reason why I asked this morning whether the jury were Christians, meaning thereby that Christians might possibly condemn the priesthood of the order of Aaron but not that of Christ, and that Jews might condemn Christians but not Levitical priests. What you then called mystical I will now explain more clearly. If one of you had a vocation from God to the priesthood he would seek for the succession which is undoubted and certain and which has been uninterrupted from the time of Christ, namely, that in Rome, and not for that which is not merely doubtful but without any doubt is certainly defective, as is the case with the Protestant succession. For it is certain that in the Protestant Church there is no true priesthood.' They heard him patiently to the

end without interrupting him. But when he had finished one of them remarked, 'We must obey the laws under which we were born and under which you confess that you were born.' The martyr answered, 'I acknowledge that generally this is true; and were I born amongst heathen and in a heathen country I certainly would obey those laws which were not against the laws of God. You know certainly that those who made these laws have undoubtedly and irrevocably met with the judgment that they deserved; wherefore let those who now are or who may hereafter be appointed to carry them into execution look prudently and in time to themselves and examine their conscience.' After having spoken thus he was silent. When they asked whether he had anything more to say he answered, 'Nothing further, except that I commit myself into your hands.' He was then seized and his hands were tied for him to receive sentence of death, which in other places it was not usual to do with priests. Meanwhile Sergeant Greene made a long speech, exhorting him as the fitting preparation for death to practise obedience and all other necessary virtues and to place all his faith and hope in Christ's merits and not in his own; and finally he offered that if he wished to conform to the State religion because no one of his own religion was there to instruct him, he would send him learned theologians for further discussion and his greater satisfaction. F. Bell wished to answer, but was not allowed to do so. Sentence of death was then passed on him. From the time that there had no longer been a doubt of his condemnation he was obliged to distract himself from all devout thoughts lest his excessive joy should cause him to burst into tears, which his enemies would have attributed to fear and sorrow. On hearing his sentence he intoned in a clear voice 'Te Deum laudamus,' and turning

to the judges he thanked them warmly as the authors of his happiness rather than his punishment. The judges either felt or affected to feel great sorrow that they had not been able to induce him to set a good example of obedience to the laws, and they warned him of the torments to which he was hastening unless he would repent. The martyr only answered, 'I beseech God of His infinite mercy to grant that there be not in store for you in another world greater torments than those which await me in this.' Turning to the people he addressed a few words to them, assuring them that except in the Catholic Church there was no salvation and that he did not deem himself unhappy, but on the contrary most blessed, in dying for teaching this holy doctrine for which, had he a thousand lives, he was ready to lay them all down successively.

During the few remaining days of his life crowds of Catholics of all nations flocked to receive his blessing, or his autograph, or some little gift to be treasured as a relic. He spoke to them all with perfect calmness, addressing some in French, others in Spanish, and others again in Flemish or Latin. He wrote with great humility at the bottom of pictures which he gave away, 'Pray for Francis Bell and I will pray for you.' As in love and reverence they knelt before him, kissed his feet, and called him a martyr, he answered, '*Nolite me laudare ante finem, et spero quod Deus absolvat opus.*' As if he would say, 'Praise me not, lest through you the enemy should rob me of the palm of which otherwise I should be assured.' He frequently repeated, 'I am astonished that God should have been pleased to honour me with the crown of martyrdom, and that He should have chosen me, miserable being, rather than the many holy men now in England who are aspiring to this happiness.' At all times he was

remarkable for his bright and placid temper, but now he was so filled with supernatural joy that he seemed like an angel from heaven. Thus passed the Saturday.

On Sunday morning he said Mass and numbers of his friends came to receive Holy Communion at his hands. As they entered he said to them, 'There is now only to-day to wait. I assure you that the nearer I approach my end the more my interior joy and grace increase, and there is no happiness on earth that I would exchange with mine.'

Meanwhile the French and Spanish ambassadors, forgetting all national rivalries, united their efforts to gain his pardon. The Comte d'Harcourt even offered in exchange for his life to pardon three miserable men who had robbed him. F. Charles Marchant, Prior of S. Magdalen and Chaplain to the French ambassador, had a very great friendship for F. Bell, and he also left no stone unturned to save his life. He came this Sunday morning to see him, and told him that he was trying very hard to obtain this *grace* for him, using the word 'grace' according to the French idiom as signifying his pardon. The martyr catching at the word, said, 'Ah, what joy it would give me if all Catholics would ask God's grace for me!' The Prior explained that by grace he had meant his pardon, in order that, if it were God's will, he might be spared to save many souls. 'Alas,' replied the martyr, 'do you think it a grace to deprive me of the crown I have so long desired? Hitherto I have thought that you were my friend, but if you persevere in your design I shall no longer regard you as my friend, but as my greatest enemy. I beseech you also to dissuade the Count from trying to rob me of this great happiness. Thank him for his kind intention, and tell him that I commend myself humbly to his prayers.' He frequently repeated,

‘I entreat you not to prevent my passion. I conjure you not to oppose my death which is my greatest happiness. But whatever you may attempt, I shall pray the most holy Mother of God and S. Andrew that no one may snatch from me the cross which I see before me.’

In the course of the day four Protestant ministers, sent by the parliament, came to argue with him. But he expressed himself with so much force and clearness on the real Body of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, on predestination and other controverted subjects, that they could not resist the spirit which spoke in him. Even the Protestants who stood around laughed at them, and they went away in confusion. All through the day he was overwhelmed with visitors, but he expressed no impatience at the importunate crowd. Only when night approached he said that now he should be able to prepare without interruption for the following day. He passed the whole night in prayer and meditation, and very early on Monday morning he again said Mass in the presence of several Catholics.

At length the hour for his execution arrived and he was conveyed from prison as usual on a hurdle drawn by four horses. On approaching the scaffold he said very joyfully, ‘Behold the place which Blessed F. John Baptist promised me,’ referring to F. Bullaker’s prophecy which has been already mentioned. He then ascended the platform on which stood several criminals who were to suffer with him. With the permission of the sheriff, who treated him with great kindness, he addressed the surrounding crowd.

‘My dearest fellow-countrymen, if you wish to be delivered from your present calamities you must first get rid of your sins, which doubtless are the cause of them. You must, above all, throw off the

heresy in which you have so long miserably lain; for, I grieve to say it, you are like putrid members separated from the Body of Christ. This civil war and national disturbance, and the other greater calamities which are hanging over England, are evidently chastisements by which God now begins to punish you. But they are at the same time tokens of His love and manifest proofs that He does not wish you to perish, but that you may be driven to seek shelter within the Catholic Church. Repent, I beseech you. Abuse not His goodness and mercy; force not wilfully your own perdition by provoking God's justice. For I warn you that if you persist in loving darkness rather than light and in persecuting priests and Catholics, eternal sorrow awaits you. I am brought here to suffer death, but I wish before I suffer to tell you the cause. I am not even accused of any crime, but am condemned solely for being a priest of the Catholic Church. Were I a Pagan priest I should not so much wonder at being put to death in a Christian country; but that a Catholic priest should be put to death by those who profess to be Christians and to follow Jesus Christ and His Gospel ought to surprise every reasonable person. It is said that the laws demand it. But these laws were iniquitously made and now they are being iniquitously executed. I declare before you all in the sight of God and of His Son Jesus Christ who will judge us, and I sign my declaration with my blood, that I die a true member of the Catholic Church.' Here a Protestant interrupted him, saying, 'You mean to say the Roman Church.' He answered, 'If you wish me thus to distinguish it, with all my heart I distinguish it from every Protestant Church and every sort of heresy, and call it the Roman Church. My parents lived and died in this religion. They brought me up in this faith, and if I had a

longer life to spend I would profess it to my last moment, even though I had to suffer a thousand deaths and the greatest imaginable torments.' The sheriff interrupted him, saying, 'Mr. Bell, we cannot let you declaim any longer against our laws and give a wrong impression to the people. You know that you are going to die for having seduced the king's subjects.' The martyr answered, 'I see a great multitude before me. This is why I wish to do them a good office and draw them back to the right way. They possess a part of the Catholic faith. They believe the Incarnation of our Lord, His Passion, and His Resurrection. But this is not enough, and therefore I wish to declare to them the whole truth for the good of their souls.' Some one from the crowd cried out, 'Help yourself, help yourself!' The martyr replied, 'Those who are the victims of a false religion will not listen to the truth. But I protest to you that the Protestant religion is not of Divine faith.' The sheriff again interrupted him and forbade him to speak against the Protestant religion. Seeing that his words had no effect he merely said, 'I forgive with my whole heart all who have contributed to my death, and I die joyfully for so glorious a cause.'

These last words touched many of the spectators, and especially a parliamentary officer, who having been sent as a spy to the royal camp, had been guilty of some excesses and was condemned to die as a thief. F. Bell now said to him, 'Be of good courage. Prepare yourself for death and place your confidence in our Lord. Our merciful Lord will accept the sufferings you bear willingly in expiation of your sins.' The officer who had already been struck with the martyr's courage and fortitude in prison, was now so moved by his words that he abjured the Anglican religion which he had professed throughout his life, and declared that he died in the

same Catholic faith in which F. Bell was about to die. On hearing this the martyr was filled with new joy, and speaking to him in a low voice in his ear, as if he were teaching him acts of contrition and giving him absolution, exhorted him to persevere to the end. The Protestant ministers perceiving what was going on interrupted them; but the new convert, as if he had caught some of the fire of love which burnt in the heart of his apostolic father, exclaimed, 'I die a Catholic. Do what you will with me. I am ready to suffer all in defence of the faith which God has given me the grace to embrace before I die. I hope that He will forgive my sins and that I shall soon be in Paradise with F. Bell.'

F. Bell then addressed the executioner and said to him in a loving tone, 'Ah, my brother, I am filled with grief that I do not witness your conversion from heresy before I die. Behold the example of this good thief which certainly ought to move you and make you look into your own heart. Consider his happiness and strive to imitate him. I again conjure you to give me the great joy and consolation of regarding you in death as my brother rather than my executioner.' The crowd being greatly stirred by all he said, the sheriff's officers feared that he would win many souls, and ordered the sentence to be at once carried out. As the ladder was being drawn away he raised his hands as the appointed signal, and the Prior of S. Magdalen gave him absolution. When he had hung about as long as a 'Miserere' he was cut down alive, and his secular dress being taken off, beneath it was seen the habit of his Order with his cowl and cord, which he always wore next his skin. On seeing them the crowd exclaimed with admiring wonder, 'What men are these who thus despise all earthly comforts?' The executioner completed his bloody work, burnt his heart and intestines in the

fire, cut off his head and quartered his body, thus unwittingly opening to his soul the way to the prize of eternal glory, and admitting him to the Beatific Vision after which he had so long aspired.¹

In the Carmelite convent at Lanherne, in Cornwall, are to be seen the portraits of F. Ward, F. Bullaker, F. Heath, F. Bell, and six other martyr priests, which were taken under remarkable circumstances. One of the fellow-prisoners of these ten martyrs was a gentleman from Staffordshire called Gifford. Moved with love and reverence for the men who were about to give their lives for the faith he had a great wish to possess their portraits. Though he was quite ignorant of the art of painting he tried to take their likenesses, and succeeded in a manner little short of a miracle. Nearly forty years after, the English Carmelite community at Antwerp, being in want of novices, made a novena to the English martyrs with the intention of obtaining some. Soon after Mr. Gifford's daughter, Mary, offered herself as a novice. She made her profession on the 8th April 1681, and took for her name in religion Sister Mary

¹ F. Bell's relics, through which several miracles are said to have been wrought, were eagerly collected by the households of Count Egmont and the Comte d'Harcourt and many others of the bystanders. The Prior of S. Magdalen gave some of those which he had obtained to the Queen-Regent of France, the Queen of England, and other ladies of high position, who treasured them as their most precious possessions. Count Egmont carried off the right-hand quarter of his body, six pieces of his flesh and fat, three napkins dipped in his blood and melted fat, two of his fingers, and other small bones and fragments of flesh, all of which are authenticated in the certificate in the Archives of Lille already mentioned. The nuns at the Convent of our Lady of Dolours at Taunton possess one of his thigh-bones from the hip to the knee which was sent to them at Nieuport very soon after the martyrdom, and also one of his ribs.

of the Martyrs. She brought with her the above portraits of the ten martyrs, which were preserved with great reverence in the convent till the Revolution obliged the community in 1794 to fly to England. They brought them with them to Lanherne House which was given them by Henry, the eighth Lord Arundell.

CHAPTER XV.

F. WOODCOCKE.

THE Church daily sings in the 'Magnificat,' 'He hath exalted the humble, He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.' This Divine truth was strikingly verified in the life of F. John Woodcocke, in religion Martin of S. Felix. In the eyes of man his life was a failure, for disappointment seemed ever to attend all his efforts in God's service. But in God's sight his constant humiliations were the fitting preparation for the glorious crown which was predestined to him rather than to those of his brethren who might be deemed to have more worthily merited it. Hungry after God alone he went forth from his father's house and his kindred, and his soul was filled with the good things which our Lord has prepared for those who love Him, while the Catholics who despised him for his apparent want of success and the Protestants who thought themselves rich in the possession of truth, were alike sent empty away.

F. Woodcocke¹ was born in 1603, at Clayton, near Preston in Lancashire. His father and most of his family were Protestants. But his mother was

¹ The life of F. Woodcocke is taken almost entirely from the *Certamen Seraphicum*.

a very pious Catholic, and from her he early imbibed the true faith. As he grew up she feared lest he should be infected by the heresy and bad examples that surrounded him, and she therefore sent him with his own consent to be educated by the Jesuits at S. Omer. After he had completed his classical course he went on to the English College at Rome to pursue his studies in philosophy and divinity. While he was thus occupied he conceived about the year 1627 a great desire for a higher and penitential life. His first attraction was to the English Recollects at Douai, an account of whom he had received from a friend of his, William Anderton,¹ on his admission to the Convent of S. Bonaventure. But while he was considering whether he should join them F. Luke Wadding, the historian of the Friars Minor, was struck with the talent which he had displayed in the public disputations held in the church of the Augustinians at Pentecost 1629, and offered to receive him as a novice at the Irish College of S. Isidore of which he was at that time Guardian. Eventually, however, through the persuasions of some of his friends he applied to the Capuchins for admission into their Order. Their Father-General was prepossessed in his favour by the high character which he brought from the English College and readily granted his request. He sent him to Paris to make his novitiate in the Capuchin convent in the Faubourg S. Jacques, which was at that time noted for its strict discipline and the sanctity of its inmates.

In a letter which he wrote on the 28th September 1630, to F. Thomas Fitzherbert, S.J., at Rome, thanking him for many acts of kindness, he said, 'I have put on the habit, I praise sweet Jesus, almost

¹ It was probably he who, when he was at Cambridge, was called 'Golden-mouthed Anderton' on account of his great eloquence (Wood, *Athen. Oxon.* vol. ii. p. 514).

now a quarter of the year.¹ But his joy was of short duration. For while he was rising in the estimation of all around him by his extraordinary piety and devotion he was most unexpectedly and summarily sent away. So unlooked for was this blow and so unwilling was he to go, that he could not be prevailed upon to give up his habit and it had to be torn from him by force.

The reasons which induced his superiors to take this unusual step in no way reflect on his innocence, virtue, and honour. They were stated as follows by himself to the heads of the English Franciscan Province at Douai, in the archives of which they are recorded.

First, the Capuchins were disappointed at not having received the letters which they expected from his mother and his friends in England certifying that it was not through poverty nor from any unworthy motive that he desired to enter religion. The suspicions which were excited by the non-arrival of these letters were strengthened by doubts as to his statement that the Father-General had told him in Rome that there was an English Capuchin convent in France, whereas there was only an Irish one, and even it was at Charleville. This mistake, however, is one into which foreigners who are not familiar with the distinct nationalities under the British crown might easily fall.

Secondly, they said that his mother and other relatives, and especially his brother who was not yet a Catholic, opposed his entering religion and wished him to be ordained priest and return at once to England; and they feared lest at some future time their importunities might have too much weight with him.

Thirdly, they considered that their rule forbade

¹ Oliver, p. 562.

them to admit into their Order any one who had been born of heretic parents, or who had been himself a heretic, or who had been educated amongst heretics; though, strictly speaking, this impediment is applicable only to the admission into religion of the descendants of heretics who have suffered at the stake. John Woodcocke thought that they were also influenced by the delicacy of his health, the difficulty which he had had in learning French, and the affection that he had betrayed for the Jesuit fathers who had educated him and were his countrymen.

He felt that these were insufficient motives for his dismissal. He was therefore very much discouraged and dejected, though at the same time his desire to enter the Order was greatly increased. A similar misfortune is, however, no unusual occurrence, even to those who have afterwards proved themselves saints and who doubtless were thereby led on more rapidly in the path of humility, self-renouncement, and mortification. S. John Capistran was thrice rejected and thrice received into the Order, and yet he was afterwards venerated in Germany as an inspired prophet, he was declared a confessor of the Church, and his feast and office are celebrated by the whole Order. In John Woodcocke's case it was one of those extraordinary though hidden favours which God grants to His elect through providential circumstances. The Capuchins had no mission in England, and had he remained with them he would have forfeited the martyr's crown predestined for him.

Doctors of the Church teach that if a man has a vocation to be a monk and cannot gain admittance into one Order he is bound to apply to others till he succeeds in being accepted somewhere. So likewise, if he is convinced that he has a vocation to a certain Order he must apply successively to house after house of that Order, so as to be received in one or

another of them. Accordingly John Woodcocke, as soon as he began to recover his spirits after his disappointment, being convinced within himself that he had a vocation to follow in the footsteps of S. Francis, went to Douai and asked the Recollects to receive him into the Convent of S. Bonaventure. But after he had done so and before he was admitted he changed his mind in consequence of a temptation by which he was deceived. First, he began to doubt whether in wishing to join the Seraphic Order he was actuated by the pure and simple love of God, which ought to be his sole motive. At the same time fearing from his late rejection that his father's having been a Protestant might be an impediment to his success with the Recollects as well as with the Capuchins, he arrived at the conclusion that he was unfitted for so severe a rule. Secondly, he was assailed by an inordinate desire to finish his higher studies and be ordained priest, so that he might be fitted to go on the mission. He pictured to himself what a horrible fate would be his were he to fail a second time in religion, when, not being a priest, he would not have the means of gaining his livelihood in his native country where he had already given up his inheritance with a view to taking holy orders. Thirdly, F. Luke Wadding's offer to receive him into the Irish College came to his remembrance and served to allure him away from Douai. Thus deceived by the artifices of the devil he withdrew his application to the Recollects and returned to Rome.

On his arrival in Rome, for some reason which is unknown to us he did not gain admittance to the Irish College, but remained for some time in great difficulties, restless and wandering from place to place, always stimulated by the Holy Spirit to high aspirations, and yet unable to find any means to carry his interior desires into practice. At length his

thoughts reverted to his first attraction four years before to the Seraphic Order, and becoming conscious of his double error, first in having gone to the Capuchins, and secondly in having left Douai so hastily, he resolved to retrace his steps and to beg once more for admission into the Convent of S. Bonaventure. In doing so the reasons which he assigned were, that in the various Capuchin convents in which he had been a guest they had expressed surprise at his rejection from the Order for which they thought him well fitted; that from his own experience he had himself arrived at the conclusion that he could stand the austerities of the rule; and above all he laid stress on his first attraction to that house on the occasion of his friend F. William Anderton's admission into it. At the same time being ashamed on account of his former conduct to press his request in person, he wrote the following letter to F. William Anderton:

‘Reverend Father,—Disdain not to listen to the prayers of an inferior on account of the sublime height to which Almighty God has called you; but condescend to the humble petition of one who is a great lover of your Order, and who, although he once erred through weakness of body as well as mind and a fear not altogether blameable, yet has since reflected on his former misconduct and the displeasure of your venerated superior. Being recalled to a better hope and having regained strength of body and mind, he is determined no longer to neglect what is of such great moment, but to comply with his original vocation rather than remain any longer exposed to the fluctuating waves and storms of the world.

‘The more conscious I am that it is better to be poor in the house of our Lord than to abide in the tabernacles of sinners, so much the more the conviction of my soul, now left without being carried into

effect, grows stronger within me night and day ; and the former direction of my conscience, disturbed in spite of myself from its original seat and form, incessantly solicits and urges me on ; so that the desire for its reformation, no less than that sudden fall which threw both it and my whole being into confusion, inflames my soul. Wherefore, my dear Father William, I beseech you by our old friendship which in this misfortune intercedes for me with you, and still more by the tender love of our Lord Jesus Christ, to take pity on my miserable state and apply yourself to obtain my pardon and the favour of my restoration. This is my desire ; this I ask, this I wait for ; for this I sigh and groan ; and I desire it for no other motive than for the pure love of God and His glory. Farewell ! That which formerly you saw me desire lightly strive now for Christ's sake to obtain for me more efficaciously. This will be a great happiness to me and nothing whatsoever can make me more happy. Again farewell !'

The heads of the community at S. Bonaventure's Convent were touched by the humility and earnestness of John Woodcocke's supplication, and through F. William's intercession they admitted him. In the year 1631 he was girt with the cord of S. Francis by F. Heath and received the name, Martin of S. Felix. The fruits of his late humiliations now appeared. During his novitiate he excelled all his companions in devotion and strict observance of the rule, in abstinence and mortification, and in the assiduous performance of all his duties. He applied himself especially to prayer and maintained close communion with God and His angels. In 1632, in the twenty-ninth year of his age, he made his profession to F. Francis Bell. Thus he had the singular blessing of both receiving the habit and making his vows

through a future martyr. He advanced in the path of perfection, and in due course of time he was raised to the priesthood and obtained faculties for preaching and hearing confessions. In 1638 he was appointed confessor to the nuns of S. Elizabeth's Convent where he remained for two years. He then became chaplain to Mr. Sheldon in Artois.

He had now attained to the full fruition of his long-cherished hopes and it seemed as if his trials were over. But it was not so, for God led him in a peculiar way. His health was feeble and he had frequent attacks of illness. Still he never spared himself, but by dint of extraordinary exertions, amid great difficulties and dangers, he reaped a rich harvest of souls. After two years, however, he completely broke down. He was supposed to have a mortal complaint and was compelled to give up all hope of winning souls for God or of joining the mission in England. He retired to the convent of Douai, where in lowly and loving submission to God's will and supernatural patience under the bodily sufferings caused by his bad health he occupied himself with redoubled zeal and fervour in prayer and practices of devotion. Thus for a time he led a sweet and peaceful life.

S. Augustine says that the feasts of the martyrs are exhortations to martyrdom, for what we delight to celebrate we are not slow to imitate. Thus was it with F. Martin. On Trinity Sunday 1643 a solemn service of thanksgiving for the glorious martyrdom of F. Heath, which had just taken place, was celebrated in the Church of S. Bonaventure. The words of the Capuchin who preached on the occasion transfixed F. Martin as if they had been fiery darts. From that hour he was so inflamed with a desire to follow in the martyr's footsteps that nothing seemed pleasant, nothing profitable, nothing to be aspired after except

what savoured of martyrdom, on which alone he had fixed all his thoughts and affections. He wrote several letters to F. George of S. William, the Provincial, who was then in England, asking leave to join him. But whether in consequence of the civil war the letters never reached F. George, or whether he hesitated to grant F. Woodcocke's request till he knew whether he could be spared from the convent at Douai, no answer was ever received by the latter. He wrote also to the Commissary-General. But for many reasons, and especially because he knew that he was wanted in the convent, he did not like to apply to F. Angelus Mason, the Commissary-Provincial. Being in bad health he was sent to Spa to drink the waters. Here he happened to meet F. Peter Marchant, the Commissary-General. In the familiarity of personal intercourse he found courage to lay his petition before him and received a favourable answer, dependent, however, on the permission of his immediate superior F. Angelus, to whom F. Marchant suggested that he should apply. F. Woodcocke accordingly wrote the following letter to F. Angelus :

‘Reverend Father,—Since Trinity Sunday, which I doubt not that your reverence remembers, I have written three letters to our Provincial in England asking leave to return thither. I have also written to the Commissary-General. Now that I can speak to the latter face to face, confiding in your accustomed kindness I have obtained his written consent to my desire, but with the condition, as he told me, that you should confirm it. He put his seal to the paper and gave it back to me that I might have the better opportunity to read it and countersign it, which I did when I brought it here yesterday evening. But now on more mature deliberation I dare not send it to you lest it should meet with some mis-

fortune on the way, when I should be obliged to begin the whole affair again. Hoping that you will trust my good faith, especially in such a matter in which I could not lie, I have thought it better to inform you of it by these simple lines and to ask for your consent in your next letter, which I beseech you by the tender love of the most sweet Jesus to send without delay. I can indeed express to your reverence the same motives and persuasions which I have already laid before my above-mentioned superiors in a style I confess inadequate to the subject. But I hope that it is not necessary. Your reverence knows me better than they do; nor have I less confidence in you than in them. However, I am compelled to confess that rather than not succeed in my desired object I am ready, if you wish to try me, to repeat to you the same reasons which I gave to them, though I spoke to them with less importunity, but modestly and with less persuasive reasoning. Reverend father, the season admits not of delay; winter approaches, and my health through this anxiety, or even others that are greater, is not strengthened and confirmed as your reverence and even myself could expect. Wherefore, for the love of God (kneeling now in my cell) I ask you on my knees to say Amen, and to send me your consent as quickly as is possible. The paper which I keep for its greater security, I will give or send to you when and where you choose. Meanwhile, offering my humble, obedient, and unfeigned love and service, I remain, confiding in you, and shall ever be your

‘BROTHER MARTIN OF S. FELIX.’

F. Angelus to whom the Minister-Provincial had already written, gave his consent; and strengthened and comforted by it far more than by the waters of

Spa, F. Woodcocke hurried home to prepare for his speedy departure.

He now redoubled his prayers and devout exercises for a prosperous issue to his journey. So greatly was his fervour increased that he seemed to become another man, especially after the unexpected death of F. Bell, who had just been elected Guardian. Greatly excited by the martyrdom of him to whom he had made his vows and panting to follow in his footsteps, he set out, and after encountering many perils landed at Newcastle in Northumberland. His intention was to stay a short time with his relatives in Lancashire, hoping to have the consolation of converting some of them. But scarcely had he entered his native country when he was seized by the Protestants, who were thirsting for the blood of Catholic priests; and after being taken before the magistrates he was confined in Lancaster gaol. The civil war was now at its height, and the ordinary course of justice being interrupted he remained for above two years without trial. During this time he suffered greatly from want of food and clothing; for his relatives and the friends of his family and the richer Catholics, to whom he would have naturally looked for help, were either in the royal camp or in prison or fled abroad, or possibly in some cases afraid of identifying themselves with his cause. He also suffered greatly from the malice of his enemies, the wicked conversation of his fellow-prisoners, and the intolerable stench of the prison. Notwithstanding, he gave great edification to both Catholics and Protestants by his vigils, his long and fervent prayers, and his zeal in instructing his companions and visitors, and administering the Sacraments so far as it was in his power. All his sufferings, however, seemed to him nothing in comparison to what he endured through his insatiable thirst for martyrdom. His friend F. William An-

derton, who went to visit him, wrote to F. Angelus : 'During the whole time of his imprisonment he showed the greatest desire for martyrdom, constantly declaring that the hope of it alone had drawn him back to England.' The fulfilment of this hope, however, was delayed not only for hours and days, but even for long years. During this time he languished with Divine love to such a degree that, to adopt the words of S. Bonaventure, 'he could scarcely endure the interposition of his body, which stood like a wall between him and God.'

At length, after this last trial of his faith and perseverance the long-hoped-for day arrived. The civil war came to an end and the judges resumed their circuits. On their arrival at Lancaster, F. Woodcocke and two secular priests, Mr. Bamber, alias Redding, and Mr. Whitaker, were placed at the bar. The judges asked F. Woodcocke whether he was a priest or not. As it was well known that he was he confessed it openly. They then inquired to what Order he belonged. He answered 'that he was a son or member of the Order of the Seraphic S. Francis.' Whereupon, in accordance with the laws and the usual custom without further delay they condemned him to death. On hearing his sentence he was filled with inexpressible joy and exclaimed, 'Praise be to God! God be thanked!' and by other similar expressions he gave vent to his deep thankfulness. The two secular priests were condemned at the same time.

The following night F. Woodcocke spent in prayer and joyful contemplation. At the dawn of day on the 7th August, he and his two companions were led out in the usual way to execution. An immense and noisy crowd followed them, and irritated at the happy and even joyful look with which F. Woodcocke went forth to death, they loaded them with abuse and in-

sults. The Catholics who were present were greatly edified and consoled; nor were there wanting Protestants who, astonished at his fortitude, constancy, and humility, exclaimed, 'If there ever was a true martyr in the Roman Church, this is one.' F. Woodcocke was the first to mount the ladder. After he had said a few words on the Catholic and Roman faith he was thrown off; but by some accident, or through carelessness on the part of the executioner, the rope broke and he fell to the ground. He was stunned for a moment, but he quickly recovered himself and rose to his feet without having received any injury. The sheriff ordered him to mount the ladder again, and after being thus hanged a second time he was cut down and butchered while still alive in the usual way. A Protestant woman who stood by the scaffold, and who was greatly bigoted against Catholics, declared that while the executioner was groping in his intestines and seeking for his heart she heard him invoke the name of Jesus. Thus calling in death on the sweet Name that he had loved in life, he won his crown of martyrdom and passed into the presence of Him whom he was to enjoy to all eternity.¹

The five Recollects whose martyrdom we have here narrated were not the only martyrs of the Second Province. In the Chapter Register appears the record that in 1653 three of the brethren died in prison. In 1655 two others attained to martyrdom in the same way. In 1656 three more were thrown into prison where they also seem to have died. The names of these friars are not given in the Register; but

¹ F. Woodcocke's head was taken to Douai, and kept at the Convent of S. Bonaventure till the community fled to England at the time of the French Revolution. What then befell it is not known. A bone of one of his arms is preserved in the Convent of our Lady of Dolours at Taunton.

they are written in the Book of Life. Father Lewis Wrest, a native of Kent, also suffered a long imprisonment in Lancaster Castle; but he was at length released and went to Douai, where he died in peace on the 8th of May 1669, æt. seventy-three, thirty-eight years after his profession.

Drawn by the sweet perfume of the martyrs novices flocked to take their places. One of these was Vincent, in religion John Baptist Cane, who was born and educated as a Protestant. But after spending two years at the University of Cambridge he was led by his docility of heart to the faith, and consecrated his talents and learning to the service of God as a Recollect. He became the successful opponent of Stillingfleet, Jeremy Taylor, and Owen, the great Protestant controversialists of his day.¹

Another novice of this period was F. Francis Tresham, a Benedictine of no less than twenty-six years' standing, Definitor, and Cathedral Prior of Gloucester. So eager was he to join the Franciscans that he threw off his Benedictine habit and went to S. Bonaventure's Convent without getting leave from his Superiors to do so. F. Mentisse, the Prior of the Benedictines, complained to F. Marchant, the Commissary-General; and in vindication of the spirit of discipline F. Tresham was obliged to resume his Benedictine habit and present himself before the Benedictine General Chapter in 1649, to obtain their permission to exchange the rule of S. Benedict for the more severe one of S. Francis.²

A third novice was F. John Wall who afterwards attained to the glory of martyrdom.

A fourth was F. Anthony Le Grand, a native of Douai. He was 'a Cartesian philosopher of great

¹ Wood, Athen. Oxon. vol. iv. p. 107; Oliver, p. 546.

² Chronological MS. Notes on the English Congregation of the Order of S. Bennet, by F. Bennet Welden, p. 185.

note' at Oxford, and one of his books on the Cartesian philosophy 'was much read in Cambridge.'¹ Also FF. John and Nicholas Cross,² F. Bernard Eyston and a relative of his of the same name,³ all of them writers of learning and repute, besides many others; entered the Order at this time.

F. Genings had now laboured on the mission for above fifty years, forty-six of which he had spent in the Order of S. Francis. Thrice, in 1630, 1634, and 1643, he was elected Provincial, and during his last provincialship the martyrdoms of F. Colman and F. Woodcocke had taken place. In 1651 he summed up the fruit of his religious experience in a book called *Institutio Missionariorum*, which he bequeathed as a legacy to his sons. Then, having seen all his vows fulfilled, his houses at Douai, Bruges, and Aire in perfect order, his missions in England fully organised and resplendent with the blood of martyrs, he retired to Douai, humbly to prepare for death and await his Lord's call. Here, 'full of days but fuller still of merits,' he departed in 1660 at the age of about ninety, or, as the mortuary bill says, ninety-five. His portrait was kept in the Presbytery of S. Peter's Church, Birmingham, till last year, when it was restored to his brethren, now settled at West Gorton, near Manchester.

¹ Wood, Athen. Oxon. vol. iv. p. 233.

² Oliver, pp. 547-9.

³ Oliver, p. 545. So great was the devotion of the Eyston family to the Franciscan Order that in 1734 four sisters belonging to it were nuns in S. Elizabeth's Convent.

CHAPTER XVI.

PERSECUTION UNDER CHARLES II.

THE restoration of Charles II. gave the Church in England an interval of peace and rest. The Re-collects resumed the social position which they had held in the reign of Charles I. F. Francis à Sta. Clara received Anne Hyde, Duchess of York, into the Church. F. Nicholas Cross was her chaplain till her death in 1671. F. John Cross was chaplain to King James II. F. James Ayray and F. Angelus Bix were distinguished as popular preachers; and the sermons preached at Somerset House by the former before the Queen Dowager, Catherine of Braganza, and by the latter before Queen Mary of Modena, were published and have come down to us.

F. Francis à Sta. Clara died at Somerset House on Whit-Monday, May 31, 1680, at the age of eighty-two, after labouring fifty-seven years on the English mission, and accomplishing three jubilees—of religion, of the priesthood, and of the mission.¹ He had long wished to spend his last days and die at Oxford, in order that he might be buried by the side of his friend F. Day and among the bones of so many of his brethren in S. Ebb's Church. But the breaking out of the so-called Popish Plot prevented his doing so; and as the queen objected to his being buried in the vault under Somerset House Chapel, he was laid in the church belonging to the Savoy Hospital in the Strand.² We have a long list of his spiritual and controversial works, but that by which he is now most known is his *Historia Minor Provinciæ Angliæ Fratrum Minorum*.

After eighteen years of peace there came a crisis

¹ Oliver, p. 550.

² Wood, Athen. Oxon. vol. iii. p. 1227.

which gave a new character to the Church's contest with English Protestantism. Up to this time the mass of the English nation was in great measure guiltless of the blood of the martyrs. The persecution had hitherto been carried on almost entirely by successive sovereigns from personal motives of ambition or rapacity, while the nation under the Tudors had been on the side of the Church, and under the Stuarts the persecuting spirit had been confined to the comparatively small Puritan party whose chief strength lay in their Scottish allies. Moreover, though the practice of the Catholic religion had been forbidden, Catholics had enjoyed all the civil rights which for centuries had been supposed to be the inalienable heritage of Englishmen. But now the national divisions afforded an opportunity for the formation of a political faction, who made it their object to secure all power exclusively to themselves by getting the control of the Parliament; and it was essential to their success to deprive both Catholics and Dissenters, whose numbers were the majority in the nation, of civil and religious liberty.

Their first step was to get rid of the Catholics. This was the more easy because Protestants generally were alarmed by the fact that the next heir to the throne, James, Duke of York, was a Catholic. There happened to be at this time a man called Titus Oates, who was exactly suited to their purpose. He had been an Anabaptist preacher in Cromwell's time, and an Anglican clergyman after the Restoration; but he had forfeited his successive offices in consequence of gross immorality and perjury. He now offered his services to Dr. Tonge, rector of S. Michael's, in Wood-street, Cheapside, who was notorious for his hatred of Catholics and his readiness to believe anything against them. It was agreed between them that Oates should go to the Jesuits abroad as

a pretended convert in order to discover their secrets. Twice he was received by the Society, and twice he was disgracefully expelled. But during his stay with them he had picked up the names of many Jesuits and of the most influential English Catholics. On his return to England he pretended to have discovered that the above persons had formed a plot to murder the king and seize the government. He had not any letter or other paper nor a single witness to support his story, and his character was enough to disprove it. Notwithstanding, both Houses of Parliament took it up seriously, and the whole nation went mad with terror. Other witnesses of the same stamp as Oates soon came forward to share the profits that he made out of his perjury. They told the wildest and most absurd stories, they contradicted each other, and even contradicted themselves. But nothing was too wild or too improbable to be believed, and for a time not a Catholic in the kingdom was safe. Thus the popular 'No Popery' cry was for the first time got up, and thus the mass of the nation was drawn into sharing with its rulers the guilt of persecuting God's Church.

In the persecution that followed the sons of S. Francis had their share. There was in Lancashire a gentleman called Wall, whose two eldest sons suffered for the faith. The eldest, William, a monk of the Benedictine Abbey of Lamspring in Germany, was tried under the name of Marsh or Marshall on the testimony of Oates and Bedloe as an accomplice in the plot, and was acquitted. But he was afterwards tried and condemned to death as a priest. He was however reprieved and survived the persecution.¹

The second brother, John, in religion F. Joachim of S. Anne, was born in 1620, and sent when he was very young to the English College at Douai. In 1641

¹ Challoner, vol. ii. p. 232.

he passed on to the English College at Rome, where he was ordained priest in 1648. He afterwards returned to Douai and received the habit of S. Francis at the Convent of S. Bonaventure on New Year's-day, 1651; and on the same day of the following year he was professed. So great was the estimation in which he was held by his brethren that within a few months he was elected Vicar of the convent, and soon after Master of Novices. In 1656 he joined the English mission, and for twelve years he laboured in Worcestershire under the name of Francis Johnson or Webb, winning souls even more by his example than by his words. When the disturbance about the Plot broke out it happened that he was staying with Mr. Finch, at Rushock Court near Bromsgrove, and the sheriff's deputy having come there in search of another man, he was taken up under suspicion of being a priest. He was carried before Sir John Pakington and another justice of the peace, and on his refusal to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy he was committed to Worcester gaol in the beginning of December 1678. In a narrative of his imprisonment and trial which he himself wrote, he says:

'Imprisonment in these times, especially when none can send to their friends, nor friends come to them, is the best means to teach us how to put our confidence in God alone in all things, and then He will make His promise good, "that all things shall be added unto us" (Luke xii.), which chapter, if every one would read and make a good use of, a prison would be better than a palace, and a confinement for religion and a good conscience' sake more pleasant than all the liberties the world could afford. As for my own part, God give me His grace and all faithful Christians their prayers: I am happy enough. We all ought to follow the narrow way, though there be many difficulties in it. It is an easy thing to run the

blind way of liberty, but God deliver us from all broad sweet ways.’¹

After about five months’ imprisonment he was placed at the bar at the assizes on the 25th of April 1679, before Judge Atkins, on an indictment of high treason for being a priest and remaining in the country contrary to the statute of Elizabeth 27. The only voluntary witness against him was a man who lived at Stourbridge, whom he had often reprimanded for his wicked life, and who now took this way of revenging himself; but three other witnesses were compelled to appear against him. As for himself, he would neither confess nor deny his priesthood, but defended himself with great courage and wisdom. Notwithstanding the jury found him guilty and the judge condemned him to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. On hearing his sentence he made a bow, and said aloud, ‘Thanks be to God! God save the king! I beseech God to bless your lordship and all this honourable bench.’ The judge answered, ‘You have spoken very well. I do not intend that you should die—at least not for the present, until I know the king’s further pleasure.’

F. Wall thus continues :

‘I was not, I thank God for it, troubled with any disturbing thoughts, either against the judge for his sentence, or the jury that gave in such a verdict, or against any of the witnesses; for I was then of the same mind, as by God’s grace I ever shall be, esteeming them all the best friends to me, in all they did or said, that ever I had in my life. And I was, I thank God, so present with myself, whilst the judge pronounced the sentence, that, without any concern for anything in this world, I did actually at the same time offer myself and the world to God. After the judge was gone from the bench, several Protestant

¹ Challoner, p. 220.

gentlemen and others, who had heard my trial, came to me, though strangers, and told me how sorry they were for me. To whom with thanks I replied that I was troubled they should grieve for me or my condition, who was joyful for it myself; for I told them I had professed this faith and religion all my lifetime, which I was as sure to be true as I was sure of the truth of God's word on which it was grounded; and therefore in it I deposed my soul and eternal life and happiness; and therefore, should I fear to lose my temporal life for this faith whereon my eternal life depends, I should be worse than an infidel; and who-soever should prefer the life of their bodies before their faith, their religion, or conscience, they were worse than heathens. For my own part, I told them I was as ready, by God's grace, to die to-morrow as I had been to receive the sentence of death to-day, and as willingly as if I had a grant of the greatest dukedom.¹

Up to this time no Catholic had been executed in Worcester for religion, and hence there appears to have been a great aversion from putting F. Wall to death solely for being a priest, and on the strength of an old statute. He and several other priests, who also had been condemned for their character alone, were therefore sent up to London with the hope of implicating them in the plot. On his return to Worcester F. Wall wrote on July 18th to Mr. Charles Trinder, afterwards Serjeant-at-law, giving him an account of what had passed in London:

‘Sir,—With my service I return you thanks for the twenty shillings. I am safe returned from London, whither I was sent to be examined by Mr. Oates and Bedloe, Dugdale and Prance, to see if any of them had anything against me, as guilty of concerning

¹ Challoner, p. 221.

these great disturbances of the times. I was very strictly examined by all four, several times over, in that month I stayed in London; and thanks be to God I was, after the last examination, publicly declared innocent and free of all plots whatever by Mr. Bedloe, who examined me last; and he was so kind to me, that he told me publicly that if I would but comply in matter of religion, that he would pawn his life for me that for all I was condemned yet I should not die. I was also offered the same after my first examination, though I should have been never so guilty, if I would have done what was against my conscience. But I told them I would not buy my life at so dear a rate as to wrong my conscience. How God will dispose of all us that are condemned none know. Some think it is concluded we must all die; and yet, because it will not appear grateful in the eyes of rational and moral men to see us die merely for conscience' sake, I have been several times informed from London, since I came down, that if possible some will do their best to bring some of us, one way or other, into a plot, though we have all at London been declared innocent after strict examination. God's will be done! The greater the injury and injustice done against us by men to take away our lives, the greater our glory in eternal life before God. This is the last persecution that will be in England; therefore I hope God will give all His holy grace to make the best use of it. All these things have been sufficiently prophesied long since; and I do no way question the truth, though it is like some will suffer first, of whom I have a strong imagination I shall be one. God's will be done in earth as it is in heaven, and in mercy bring me happy thither!

‘I subscribe, sir, your faithful servant,

‘FRANCIS WEBB.’

At the bottom of this letter Serjeant Trinder wrote : ' This holy priest, sometimes called Mr. Johnson, whose true name was Wall, was martyred at Worcester. He was equally courageous and cheerful at his apprehension, during his imprisonment, at his trial, and to his very death.'

At length, after the lapse of four months from his condemnation F. Wall was ordered to prepare for execution. He then wrote a long speech which he gave to a friend, ordering him to have it printed. In it he declared his faith, hope, and charity, professed his own abhorrence, and that of the Catholic Church, of all plots and conspiracies, or the concealment of such, implored God's mercy for himself, for the whole Church, for the king and kingdom, and for his persecutors, whom he forgave from his heart. He asked pardon of all whom he had in any way offended ; and finally, he offered up his death to God and commended his soul into His hands. F. William Lewison or Lewson, who went to see him in prison, wrote the following account of his visit and of F. Wall's execution :

' Of late I was desired, and willingly went, to visit our friend Mr. Webb, " Father Wall," prisoner at Worcester, whose execution drew near at hand. I came to him two days before it, and found him a cheerful sufferer of his present imprisonment, and ravished, as it were, with joy, with the future hopes of dying for so good a cause. I found, contrary to both his and my expectation, the favour of being with him alone ; and the day before his execution I enjoyed that privilege for the space of four or five hours together, during which time I heard his confession and communicated him, to his great joy and satisfaction. I ventured likewise, through his desire, to be present at his execution, and placed myself boldly next to the

under-sheriff, near the gallows, where I had the opportunity of giving him the last absolution, just as he was turned off the ladder. During his imprisonment he carried himself like a true servant and disciple of his crucified Master, thirsting after nothing more than the shedding of his blood for the love of his God, which he performed with a courage and cheerfulness becoming a valiant soldier of Christ to the edification of all Catholics and admiration of all Protestants, the rational and moderate part especially, who showed a great sense of sorrow for his death, decrying the cruelty of putting men to death for priesthood and religion. He is the first that ever suffered at Worcester since the Catholic religion entered into this nation, which he seemed with joy to tell me before his execution. He was quartered, and his head separated from his body, according to his sentence. His body was permitted to be buried, and was accompanied by the Catholics of the town to S. Oswald's churchyard, where he lies interred. His head I got privately, and conveyed it to Mr. Randolph, who will be careful to keep it till opportunity serves to transport it to Douai. The miseries we here lie under are great; and I hope our brothers in safety will be mindful of our condition in their best thoughts, and beg of God we may cheerfully bear our crosses, and, if it be His holy will, courageously sacrifice our lives, which is the earnest desire of, &c.,

‘WILLIAM LEVISON.

‘August 25th, 1679.’

F. Wall suffered on the Octave of the Assumption, August 22, 1679. His head was kept in the Convent of Douai till the French Revolution broke out and the community fled to England. But what then became of it is not known. The Catholics of

¹ Challoner, p. 222.

Worcester found consolation in remarking, as a proof of his sanctity, that his grave always appeared green, while the rest of the churchyard, which was a constant thoroughfare, was bare.

Another martyr for the faith was F. Francis Levison, in religion F. Ignatius of Sta. Clara, brother of F. William whose letter is above quoted. He was born in 1646, entered the Order of S. Francis in 1664 when he was eighteen, and laboured in the English mission for twelve years till he was put into prison in December 1678. His brother says of him in the above letter : ' My poor brother continues still a close prisoner and complains much of want. The justice who committed him has endeavoured to bribe witnesses to swear against him, but as yet cannot prevail with any. What will be the event of these proceedings only God knows.' The event was, that after fourteen months' close imprisonment and starvation he was released from his fetters and his sufferings by death, on the 11th of February 1680, having compressed into his brief thirty-four years of life merits outweighing many a longer span.

Another Franciscan martyr was Charles Mahony. He was born in Ireland and belonged to the Irish Province. The details of his life have not reached us, and we only know that when he was under forty years of age he was returning from abroad to his native country, and the ship in which he sailed was driven by stress of weather on the coast of England. He travelled through Wales in the heat of the persecution, and being discovered to be a priest he was committed to prison and afterwards tried at Denbigh for taking orders in the Church of Rome and being found in the kingdom. At his trial he confessed himself to be a priest, and he was accordingly condemned and sent to Ruthin to suffer. On the 12th of August 1679, he was drawn in his habit

to the place of execution where he spoke as follows :

‘ Now God Almighty is pleased I should suffer martyrdom, His holy Name be praised, since I die for my religion. But you have no right to put me to death in this country, though I confessed myself to be a priest; for you seized me as I was going to my native country, Ireland, being driven at sea on this coast; for I never used my function in England before I was taken. However, God forgive you, for I do, and shall always pray for you, especially for those who were so good to me in my distress. I pray God to bless our king, and defend him from his enemies, and convert him to the holy Catholic faith. Amen.’¹

He suffered with great constancy, and being cut down alive was butchered in the usual way.

Another Recollect² who now suffered was Charles Parry. He was seized and committed to Newgate by Sir William Turner, and was brought to trial on the 17th of January 1679, with the Benedictines, FF. Corker and William Wall, and several others. He was accused of being in holy orders, and the witnesses against him were Oates and Prance. Oates swore that he had heard him say Mass at the Spanish ambassador’s chapel at Wildhouse and at Mr. Paston’s; and Prance bore witness that he had heard him say Mass both at Mr. Paston’s and at the Venetian ambassador’s. F. Parry assured the court that he had never been at Wildhouse, and he produced a certificate, signed by Count Egmont, the Spanish ambassador, and all his servants, declaring

¹ Challoner, vol. ii. p. 219.

² Challoner says (vol. ii. p. 219) : ‘ Priest, as I take it, of the secular clergy.’ But he appears as a Franciscan in a list of those who were condemned on account of Oates’s Plot (Dodd, vol. iii. p. 400).

that they had never seen him there ; nor had he ever been at the Venetian ambassador's, nor at Mr. Paston's. Notwithstanding he was found guilty and condemned to death on the sole evidence of the miscreant Oates and the wretched Prance, who had been driven mad by torture and now alternated between giving evidence against prisoners in court and confessing on his knees before the Privy Council that his evidence was false. F. Parry received his sentence with great joy, exclaiming, 'Te Deum laudamus!' He was, however, afterwards reprieved; but as there is no account of his release it is probable that he died in prison.

Another sufferer of the Order was F. William, in religion Marianus Nappier,¹ alias Russell, a native of Oxford. Though he was chaplain to the Spanish ambassador at Wildhouse when the Plot broke out in 1678, yet he was seized in his lodgings by Sir William Waller, Justice of the Peace for Middlesex. Sacerdotal ornaments being found in his room he was committed to Newgate on suspicion of being a priest. He was placed at the bar of the Old Bailey with F. Parry and the Benedictine Fathers above mentioned, and like them was condemned on the sole evidence of Oates and Prance. He was not, however, executed, but was kept in prison till 1684, when he was banished. He then retired to S. Bonaventure's Convent at Douai, where he happily finished his course on the 4th October 1693, in the seventy-fifth year of his age and fifty-fifth of his religious profession.²

Three other Recollect fathers, Bernardine Lang-

¹ He was doubtless a relative of George Nappier, priest of the English College at Douai, who also was a native of Oxford, and was martyred there on the 9th of November 1610.

² Dodd, vol. iii. p. 322 ; Oliver, p. 565.

worth, Francis of S. Magdalen, and Gregory Jones, suffered imprisonment for the faith for six years, from 1678 till the accession of King James II., when they were released.¹

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

SINCE the reign of Charles II. no Catholic blood has been shed in England. But the persecution of Catholics by the State continued for nearly one hundred and fifty years longer; and at great political crises the 'No Popery' cry has been raised and popular violence has been aroused against them.

At the Revolution of 1688, the Recollects FF. Francis Hardwick and William Lockier were imprisoned for several months in Newgate, FF. Daniel Selby and Lewis Grimbalsen in York Castle, and F. Bernardine Barras in the dungeon at the Kidcote prison at the end of York Bridge. F. Gervase Cartwright also was thrown into Leicester gaol and sentenced to death. But after he had suffered imprisonment for two years and four months he was released and banished.²

As soon as it was known that the Prince of Orange had landed in Torbay mobs attacked the Catholic chapels. They made a desperate assault for a day and a night on the Recollects' house in Lincoln's-inn-fields. But as the king had sent a guard of infantry and cavalry to defend it their violence was powerless. When at length James resolved to leave London he ordered F. John Cross, then Provincial, to vacate the house, which he ac-

¹ Oliver, p. 565.

² Ibid.

cordingly did. But though a guard of soldiers still held it the mob wreaked their fury on it, and the friars incurred a loss of above 3000*l*.¹

The first priest who was arraigned for his priesthood after the Revolution was a Recollect, F. Angelus Fortescue. In his youth he had given up a large estate to make himself poor for Christ's sake, and he was greatly beloved by his brethren for his solid virtue, his perfect obedience, and his learning.²

The most celebrated martyr of this period was F. Paul of S. Francis Atkinson. He was born in Yorkshire in 1656, was professed at S. Bonaventure's Convent on the 27th December 1673, and joined the English mission in 1687. Here he was noted for his zeal and diligence in his pastoral office, by which he brought back many wanderers to the fold. He was summoned to attend the twenty-third Provincial Chapter at London, on the 9th of July 1698; but he did not appear nor send any excuse for his absence. Before long his brethren discovered that he had been accused as a priest by a pretended convert and condemned to perpetual imprisonment in Hurst Castle. They made every effort to obtain his release, but in vain. For thirty years he remained in close confinement, rejoicing to suffer for Christ's sake, till God summoned him to receive his crown on the 15th October 1729, when he had attained the age of seventy-four and the fifty-sixth year of his religious profession. His death is thus recorded in the Chapter Register :

'In Hurst Prison, Hants, died the venerable confessor of the faith and of Christ's priesthood, F. Paul Atkinson, formerly lector of theology, Definitor of the Province, and a jubilarian of the Order; who during a continual martyrdom of thirty years re-

¹ Chapter Register, p. 29, ap. Oliver, p. 548.

² Ibid. p. 247, ap. Oliver, p. 570.

flected honour on his prison, on our Province, and on the English mission; who, though not cut off by the persecutor's sword, still, as we piously trust, did not forego the palm of martyrdom. Wherefore we do not commend him so much to the prayers of our brethren as we do propose him as a model for their imitation.¹

The last English martyr was a Recollect. His death is thus recorded:

'In 1746 the Venerable Confessor of Jesus Christ, F. Germanus Holmes, once lector of philosophy in our Convent of Douai, after suffering various insults from the insolent dregs of the populace from hatred of his priestly character, was consigned by the magistrates to Lancaster Castle, loaded with iron chains, where, after about four months, he fought the good fight, and there, as is piously to be hoped, finished his course; but not without suspicion of poison administered to him by a wicked woman.'²

Thus the sons of S. Francis who had been among the first to shed their blood for the unity of the Church founded on Christ's Vicar, had again the honour to close the persecution.

Invigorated by the blood of its martyrs the English Province lived on and prospered. From the Restoration it obtained a more permanent footing in England than it had had since the accession of Elizabeth. As early as 1665 a mission called Mons Gratiae, in honour of Mary, the Mother of Divine Grace, was founded at Osmundelea or Osmotherley near Northallerton in Yorkshire, through the charity of Mrs. Juliana Walmesley, though it was found prudent to buy the property in the name of Sir Godfrey Copley. A school was attached to it, and eventu-

¹ Chapter Register, p. 364, ap. Oliver, p. 566; Challoner, vol. ii. p. 245.

² Ibid. p. 430, ap. Oliver, p. 566.

ally it became a retreat for superannuated members of the Province.¹

During the short reign of James II. F. John Cross, the Provincial, was given several houses in various parts of England; and in the course of his visitation in 1687, he founded the missions of the Holy Sacrament in York, of S. Anthony of Padua at Hexham, of the Holy Cross at Goosenargh, of S. Winifred at Holywell, of the Holy Trinity at Leominster, of the Immaculate Conception at Abergavenny, of S. Mary Magdalen at Birmingham, of S. Mary of the Angels at Warwick, and of S. Francis of Assisi at Monmouth. In the course of the same year he also got a ten years' lease of the house in Lincoln's-inn-fields, the demolition of which by the mob has been related.²

True to the spirit of the old English Province the Recollects preferred large towns, especially those of a manufacturing and mercantile character, for their principal residences. They accordingly chose Birmingham as the centre of their operations. Here F. Randolph, in religion Leo of S. Mary Magdalen, resided, chiefly in the suburb of Edgbaston where they had established a school. In 1687 he built a church, and in the following year a convent, and on the 14th of September 1688 Bishop Bonaventure Giffard consecrated the church in honour of God and S. Mary Magdalen. Though the outside was quite plain the inside was finished in a handsome style. The high altar was ornamented with four Corinthian columns, and each of the side altars with two, besides other carved work. But within two months after its consecration, on the 2d of November, the interior of it and also of the adjoining convent were defaced and burnt by order of Lord Delamere. A week later the rabble of Birming-

¹ Chapter Register, p. 218, ap. Oliver, p. 559.

² Oliver, p. 548.

ham began to pull them down, and ceased not till they had torn up even the foundations. They sold the materials, and the principal townsmen, far from resisting the mob, quietly permitted or prompted their violence.

The Recollects, however, were not discouraged, but quietly held their ground. Already in April 1686 they had established a mission at the village of Baddesley, at no great distance from Birmingham. This was the literary establishment of the Order, and here they had a school which is mentioned about 1715 in the portion of the diary of F. Parkinson now at Downside, and which was in full operation in the present century. Finally, as soon as the open exercise of the Catholic religion was sanctioned by law F. Pacificus Nutt began to build a chapel in honour of S. Peter. It was opened in May 1783, and it has recently been replaced by the large church under the same invocation.¹

Meanwhile the regular succession of Provincials and the number of friars were kept up. In 1750 F. Thomas Holmes, the Provincial, certified that the Province numbered about one hundred brethren. Eleven years later, in 1761, F. Pacificus Baker certified the continuance of the same number of friars and eighty nuns at Bruges and Aire.² And when at last the persecution of three centuries was closed in 1829 by the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Bill the Province was in a prosperous state as regarded the number and talents of both friars and novices, and the flourishing condition of the missions.

The Second Province had come into existence in the fiery heat of persecution, and its life had been nourished and sustained for above two centuries by the blood of its martyrs and the heroic spirit of its

¹ Oliver, p. 565.

² Ibid. pp. 570-1.

confessors. But on the dawn of peace the changed position of the Church and the fair prospects opening out before it necessarily called for a change in its mode of work. During the persecution the friars, in common with the members of other religious Orders, had been obliged to live as chaplains in private families or isolated in small scattered missions. It had therefore been impossible to keep up the regular community life, and it is a striking proof of the supernatural energy which still lived in the Province that the religious spirit had not died out. With a view to the revival of religious discipline the heads of the Order now decided that it would be expedient to suspend for a time the operations of the English Province, preparatory to resuming them in more strict accordance with the rule. In 1830 the Province was consequently dissolved. Its members gradually died off, till at last its only representatives were F. Paschal O'Farrell and the nuns of S. Elizabeth's community in the Convent of our Lady of Dolours at Taunton.

F. O'Farrell, the last of F. Genings's sons, was born at Bristol the 26th November 1796, and was educated at the Franciscan College at Baddesley. In 1813 he received the habit of the Order and the name Paschal on the feast of the saint of that name. In 1820 he was ordained priest by Dr. Milner. For some years he conducted the studies in the college at Baddesley, for which office he was well qualified by his classical and literary attainments. On the dissolution of the Province he was placed on the mission at Bristol. Here his indefatigable zeal, singleness of purpose, and constant practice of Christian virtues won the love and veneration of his flock and the respect of even the bitterest enemies of his faith. On the 23d May 1863 he celebrated the golden jubilee of his religious profession. Five years later, in 1868, exhausted by hard work and advancing years, he re-

signed his mission and retired to the Convent of our Lady of Dolours at Taunton, in which he spent the rest of his life. The beautiful Church of S. Mary's in Bristol is the monument of his apostolate, and his memory is still cherished in the city and neighbourhood.

From the time that his Province was dissolved it was the great hope of his life that he might be spared to witness the foundation of a new English Province, which would inherit the virtues and learning of the martyrs, confessors, and doctors which its predecessors had given to the Church. The wish of his heart was granted. In 1850 the jurisdiction of the Belgian Provincial was extended to the British Isles, and in 1858 seven friars belonging to the Belgian Province were sent by order of the late Pope to England. They at first took up their abode at Sclerder, a small village in Cornwall. But in 1862 they removed to a more suitable locality at West Gorton, near Manchester. Here, in the centre of the active manufacturing and mercantile life of England they have built a large church and friary. They have also founded convents at Glasgow, Killarney, and the London suburb of Stratford. Already they number twelve Belgian and fifteen English priests. They have sent out a missionary to labour among the heathen in China, and they have several novices now studying in Belgium.

It was a great happiness to F. O'Farrell to see his beloved Order thus bursting into new life and taking root in the land, and to be the connecting link between the new foundation and its glorious predecessors. He took the warmest interest in the rise and progress of the new communities. He rejoiced to behold young men entering into them, burning with the desire to emulate the heroic spirit of their fathers. He gladly made over to them the old archives and books which had been saved from the wreck of S.

Bonaventure's Convent at Douai, and the ancient seal of the First Province, which, it will be remembered, had been handed over by F. Stanny to F. Genings, and the possession of which gives the new foundation a status as the heirs of the English Franciscan traditions and the nursery of a future Province. F. O'Farrell could now ask to be dismissed in peace. After paying a farewell visit to his brethren in the summer of 1876 he returned to his home with F. Genings's daughters at Taunton. Here, at the age of eighty-one, but with unimpaired mental vigour, he expired on the 18th November 1877. The community of S. Elizabeth in the Convent of our Lady of Dolours at Taunton is now the only direct representative of F. Genings and the Second Province.

S. Paul has said, 'That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die first.'¹ At the close of the long winter of persecution the glorious English Province of the Franciscan Order seemed to die out and perish in the earth; but only in order that on the return of the 'second spring' it might burst forth in renewed vigour and beauty through the indwelling presence of Him who is Essential and Eternal Life.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 36.

THE END.

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